



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Memories of alien abductions from the cast



INDEPENDENCE DAY

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FIRST ISSUE

ALIEN ABDUCTIONS

Real-life victims, terrifying true stories

A complete guide to Season One of

X-FILES



August 1996

(ISSN 1363 8289)

Ref: X01

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Distribution:

Comag, Tavistock Road,
West Drayton, Middlesex
UB7 7QE. Printed by St Ives
(Gillingham) Ltd.

X-posé is published monthly.

For USA readers...

Subscription price is \$73. Second
class postage paid at Rahway
N.J. Postmaster. Send address
corrections to
X-posé c/o Mercury Airfreight
International Ltd, 2323 Randolph
Avenue, Avenel, New Jersey
07001

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STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN ENTERTAINMENT

Lowell Cunningham seeks out the unusual...

News and rumors from Coming Attractions. You can visit Coming Attractions at <http://www.islandnet.com/~corona/films/intro.html>.

Vampires...

Vampires, in the works from Largo Entertainment and director Russell Mulcahy, is the story of John Crow, vampire hunter for the Vatican. Crow is close to burn-out, having seen far too many of his men die at the hands of the Undead... but the stakes (so to speak) have been raised. One of the Old Masters now knows his name, and is hunting Team Crow.



ETs

In *Contact*, radio astronomer Dr Ellen Arroway (Jodie Foster) leads a team which searches the sky for signals from intelligent extraterrestrial life.

When a message comes from the depths of space, containing the schematics of how to build an interstellar spacecraft, Ellie has to decide if she wants to be one of the team on board that will make contact. Robert Zemeckis directs.



WESLEY AND THE DEVIL



Wesley Snipes is on board to produce and headline *Lucifer*, the story of a man who must break all 10 commandments as part of a deal with the devil. Snipes plays the title role. Also in the works is *Blade*, based on Marvel Comics' vampire hunter. Snipes again plays the title role.

X-CHANGES

X-Files fans must look to Sunday nights this Fall. Word is that Fox will use *X-Files*'s old timeslot for *Millennium*, Chris Carter's new show about a man who tracks serial killers. Sharing Friday night is the returning *Sliders*. *The X-Files* continues to prove fertile ground. Fox Interactive has announced a CD-ROM game to be released in 1997, featuring new footage of David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson. The CD joins such successful merchandising efforts as T-shirts, trading cards, and comic books. An *X-Files* feature film is also planned, with filming anticipated some time next year.



Stranded

James Cameron bought the film rights to Patricia Anthony's novel *Brother Termite*, which concerns aliens stranded on a hostile Earth. Sayles was chosen as screenwriter by Cameron because of his previous work on 'fish-out-of-water' alien screenplays, such as *The Brother from Another Planet*.



Elemental

Luc Besson, director of *The Professional*, is at work on *The Fifth Element* for Sony Pictures. Bruce Willis and Gary Oldman star in a story about a cab driver who gets entangled in an alliance of aliens and humans who fight the physical manifestation of pure evil.

Mad Max

Warner Brothers plans a new *Mad Max* motion picture to supplement the television series spin-off, slated for next season. There are plans for toys from the film series and the television series. George Miller, the creator and director of the *Mad Max* movie series, is working on the picture, which will go on with or without Mel Gibson's participation.



King Fogbound

The Mist from director Frank Darabont is based upon the Stephen King novella of the same name. The story, which has been likened to a cross between Lovecraft and *Night of the Living Dead* concerns a strange mist which settles upon a small Maine town, and which hides horrifying creatures which prey upon any living creature they encounter.

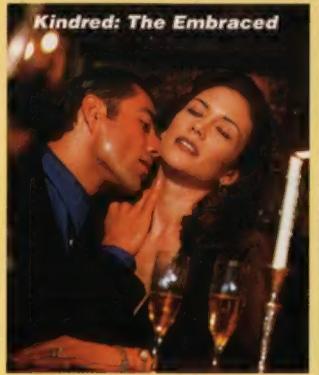
Oh Gods!

When the ancient demi-god Kothanga is unleashed, it's up to a graduate student and a police lieutenant to stop the creature before more deaths occur. That's the premise of *Relic*, from Paramount

NO FANGS...

It's been a rough year for vampires on the small screen. The syndicated series *Forever Knight* aired its last episode and Fox's *Kindred: The Embraced* hasn't been picked up after its seven episode run.

Fan interest in *Kindred* has been high, however, encouraging Spelling Entertainment to seek other possible homes for the series, perhaps in the form of a cable series or TV movies. After all, vampires are notoriously hard to kill.



MEN IN BLACK SIGHTED



Tommy Lee — in Black



Linda Fiorentino

A black car screeches to a halt. Out step two mysterious, imposing, black-suited men who immediately take charge, claiming to represent a powerful government agency. Is this part of a real-life UFO cover-up? No, it's a scene from the upcoming motion picture *Men in Black*, currently being filmed in New York and Los Angeles.

Unlike their ominous, nameless counterparts of urban folklore, agents Jay (Will Smith) and Kay (Tommy Lee Jones) of *Men in Black* are more interested in protecting the Earth from destruction than in hiding the existence of extraterrestrials — though they do that too. Armed with high-tech weapons, alien devices, and deceptively ordinary-looking automobiles, the two track down, capture, or destroy any unwelcome otherworlder which threatens the safety or security of the planet. Columbia Pictures and Amblin Entertainment have joined forces to bring *Men in Black* to the big screen, backing the production with a \$60 million budget and calling on the efforts of Academy Award winning special effects artists. Filming of this action/comedy spans four months, five soundstages, and dozens of locations.

Men in Black is based on a comic book written by Lowell Cunningham and published by Malibu Comics, stars Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, and Vincent D'onofrio. Barry Sonnenfeld directs, Walter Parkes and Laurie McDonald are Producers, and Steven Spielberg is Executive Producer. Creature designs and make-up effects created by Rick Baker. Supporting actors include Rip Torn (*The Larry Sanders Show*), Carel Struycken (*Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *The Addams Family*) and Tony Shalhoub (*Wings*). And a note for *X-Files* fans: Among the celebrity visitors to the *Men in Black* set was Alex Trebek, host of *Jeopardy!* If the significance of this escapes you, try re-watching the episode *Jose Chung's From Outer Space*.

bly direct the big screen adaptation of David Brin's post-apocalyptic novel *The Postman*. As the title character, Costner plays a man who sees mail delivery as a means to combat the forces of anarchy.



Doomed!

Universal is working on a motion picture adaptation of the massively successful software hit *Doom*. In the Id program, a tough space marine (and his arsenal of weapons) is all that stands in the way of undead hordes from reaching Earth. Tom Berenger is appar-

ently a hard-core *Doom* player and is rumored to want the part of the space marine in the film version, though nothing has appeared to confirm Bergener's alleged statement.

Pictures, based on the novel by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Childs.

Disaster

A nearby star goes *Supernova*, causing dire effects for humanity — and an MGM/UA movie of the same name. Look for it sometime after summer 1997.

Fire

Mel Gibson is developing a new film version of Ray Bradbury's SF classic *Fahrenheit 451*. The title refers to the temperature at which paper burns, an important piece of information in a world where books have been banned and are incinerated whenever discovered. Lead character Guy Montag (Mel Gibson?) is a 'fireman' who begins to question the validity of his job as professional book-burner.



The Truth...



This Fall NBC unveils *Dark Skies*, a series based on the premise that extraterrestrials have influenced Earth history as a prelude to invasion.

Night-time

The Los Angeles production company Ministry of Film has bought half of *London Night*, an independent comic book based in North Carolina. This should lead to even more comic book based films in the future.

More July 4th

Producers of the Science Fiction action film *Independence Day* are so confident of the picture's success that they've already begun work on a sequel.

Reflections

Daily Variety reports that Francis Ford Coppola will be directing the Science Fiction epic *Mirror*. The film's story comes from Matthew Jacobs, writer of the Fox Network's *Doctor Who* movie.

Spawned

New Line Cinema is developing a film based on Todd Mc-

Costnerworld

Kevin Costner will star and possi-

STRANGE HAPPENINGS OUT IN THE FIELD

Lowell Cunningham examines the unexplained...

KNOW YOUR EXTRA TERRESTRIALS

Possibly the most circulated work in UFO circles is the famous — some would say infamous — Krill document. So named for its author's cryptic pseudonym, the Krill paper purports to offer the full scoop on all forms of alien visitation and includes descriptions of several different extraterrestrial species.

The most famous and most frequently sighted aliens are known as Greys, for their ashen skin color. Short, thin, and apparently genderless, these aliens have large, rounded heads, huge, almond shaped eyes, and tiny mouths. The Krill document describes three types of Greys, differentiated by their hands, lips, and personalities. The more aloof, technological Greys featured prominently in Whitley Strieber's *Communion*.

Members of the race known variously as Nordic, Swede, or Blond appear very much like youthful, athletic, light-haired humans. A similar, allied species known as the 'Very Tall Race' have the same general appearance but average almost eight feet in height.

Clones of the Nordics are said to have been hybridized by the Greys for use as slaves.

'Hairy Dwarves' are about four feet tall and, not surprisingly, are quite hirsute. Even tinier aliens are the bluish 'Short Humanoids', which rarely exceed two feet in height and are often sighted in Mexico.

If you should happen to sight a being which doesn't match any of the above descriptions, keep in mind that there are claimed to be forty different alien cultures visiting our planet.

For assistance detecting ETs — or just coping with reality — you might look to Schwa, from graphic artist Bill Barker. Barker's company, based in Reno, Nevada, began in 1992 and has

become a cult phenomenon and is verging on international success.

Barker wanted to develop a line of humorous, yet thought-provoking products to parody the seemingly endless list of fears and worries people have about modern living. He founded the Schwa Corporation and developed a complete line of alien defense products, from alien-detecting key chains to an invasion survival manual, all produced in a high-quality graphic style.

"After using Schwa, people will no longer look at the sky, wondering where it all began. They'll know," states the company's brochure.

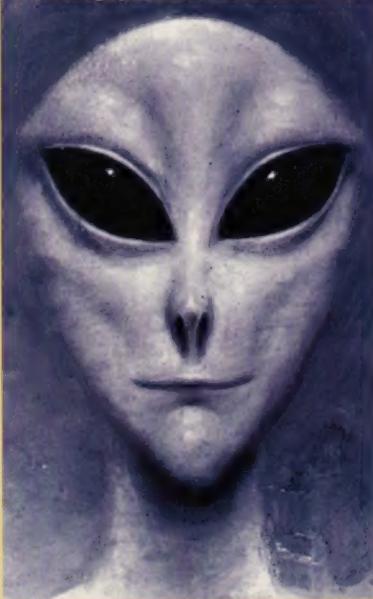
But where, exactly, did Schwa come from? "I had been working on various projects when I came up with a series of powerful black and white drawings about stickpeople being fooled by aliens," Barker says. "I looked for a name and saw the word 'Schwa', the phonetic symbol for the sound 'uh', in the dictionary. It seemed to sum up what I wanted to express about the confusing world we live in." Indefinite is a part of the word's definition and that is precisely what Schwa is intended to be.

The drawings use an alien symbol as a foil for the ideas in the products. "I like the strong reactions people have about the idea of aliens. Whether they exist or not doesn't matter; it's the only really exciting myth we have."

The Schwa phenomenon spread across the country and beyond, with England the biggest center for Schwa so far. It's also very popular in San Francisco, Austin, Chicago and, of course, Reno.

Schwa recently became available on the Internet or you can write to SCHWA, Box 6064, Reno, NV, 89513.

The Greys, as seen in *Communion*



Nessie & Chessie



The secret of the Loch
Courtesy Fortean Picture Library

According to *Daily Variety*, Kathy and Gary Campbell, residents of Scotland, decided to create a Loch Ness Monster fan club after sighting Nessie earlier this year. The Campbells hope their organization will be a clearing house for information between scientific researchers and the general public.

You don't have to travel to Scotland to search for lake monsters. For decades Maryland's Chesapeake Bay has been home to an alleged giant snake-like animal nicknamed 'Chessie'. Like its European counterpart, Chessie is known mostly through witness reports and the occasional blurry video image.

April Fool?

A posting in various Internet newsgroups purports to announce the Canadian Library Association's plans to implement the 'V-Barcode'. Named after the 'V-Chip', the strip would be placed in the spine of all library books and be encoded with a rating based on religious, violent, or

sexual content as well as any mention of drugs, rough language, or 'alternative lifestyles'.

Successful use in public libraries would set the groundwork for a similar system for use in retail outlets.

Every indication is that the 'V-Barcode' is a figment of some prankster's imagination, but given the tone of the times it might just turn out to be a highly accurate prediction.

Shroud of Turin

It may be impossible to accurately date the Shroud of Turin. Some believe the cloth carries the burial image of Jesus, despite the fact that previous tests suggest that the shroud was made sometime between 1260 and 1390. In an article by Associated Press, researcher Leoncio Garza-Valdes of San Antonio's Texas Health Science Center is quoted as saying the presence of micro-organisms in the shroud and other ancient fabric means that "The radiocarbon dating of ancient textiles is not a reliable test." You can check www.shroud.com for detailed photographs of the famous image.

Faked?



Roswell theories...

Smear magazine, accessible on the internet at <http://www.mcs.com/~kvg/smear.htm>, offers an amusingly cranky outlook on the UFO phenomenon. One of *Smear*'s more interesting theories is that the Roswell incident and other UFO incidents may have been created by the CIA during the Cold War in order to convince Russia that the US had alien technology. CIA funding of UFO organizations and publications would be a logical result of such a program.

Smear is also a good source for interesting excerpts from the world of tabloid journalism. An example from *Weekly World News*

PUERTO RICAN VAMPIRE SCARE

Reports of a predatory, vampiric creature have been circulating for months throughout Puerto Rico and sightings are beginning to occur in southern Florida. The alleged creature, dubbed 'chupacabra' — literally 'goat-sucker' — for its propensity in attacking farm animals, has created such an air of terror among the general public that even government officials have gotten involved in the search.

Eye-witness descriptions vary in certain particulars. Sometimes the creature is said to have a tail, other times a wing-like membrane between its appendages. Its skin has been variously described as grey, green, or maroon, though the variety of color could be a consequence of a chameleon-like ability to blend with the background (a talent somewhat at odds with the strong, sulphurous odor the creature is said to exude). Occasionally chupacabra are seen to glide or fly.

Accounts do agree in the creature's general appearance: reptilian form, large eyes and fangs, strong hind legs and small arms terminating in three-clawed hands. Spines or spikes are commonly seen along its back, with coarse hair over the rest of the body.

Some researchers see a similarity between reports of chupacabra and sightings of the 'grey' aliens, leading to speculation that the goat-sucker may be of extraterrestrial origin; if not an intelligent alien, then perhaps a pet. Others feel the chupacabra may be the product of genetic experiments gone wrong or even a previously unknown and undiscovered natural species.

Whatever its origin, there has yet to be a substantiated report of a chupacabra attack against humans. Goats, cows, and chickens and the occa-



sional teddy bear are not so safe, however. An article from the *St Petersburg Times* recounts a particularly dramatic assault in which a total of 69 farm animals were killed.

A key question is whether or not the victim animals are actually drained of blood. All reports describe deep puncture wounds, and even missing organs, but the cause and consequence of these injuries is a matter of contention. Believers of Chupacabra claim the method of attack shows intelligence, killing the prey instantly and relatively pain-

lessly, allowing the body to be drained of blood. The contrary view is that the dead animals aren't bloodless and that such destructive attacks are very much in keeping with the behavior of dog packs, so there's no indication of any unknown animal.

Whether or not the goat-sucker is reality or folklore, it has struck a chord with the public. Clothing, sandwiches, and even pop songs mentioning chupacabra have been very successful, and even local media have gotten in on the search. In the Puerto Rican town of Canovanas, which is home to a number of sightings, mayor Jose Soto has used his search for the creature to allay public fears — and quite possibly to gain attention for his re-election campaign. A Florida radio station even sponsored a chupacabra search, offering a \$1,000 reward to anyone lucky enough to capture the creature on film.

The Chupacabra isn't the first or only creature of its type to be reported. In the 1970's, Puerto Rico was home to another scare; the 'Vampire De Moca' was blamed for the deaths of several cows.

Some say the current creature sightings may be directly related

describes space aliens bringing gold and jewels to trade with Iraqi nomads — in return for sheep and goat dung.

Species

The British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club newsletter offers up two 1995 articles from German publications. From The Westfalenpost a report of 20 or more different, highly unusual aquatic species found off the southwest coast of Tasmania. From Die Welt the claim that Chinese scientists have discovered two new species of gray panda. There doesn't appear to have been any similar reports in the US media.

Thriller!

Is Michael Jackson expecting guests from another planet?

According to UFO researcher Mike Luchman, quoted in *New York Daily Times*, "For years Michael has had top-secret plans to build a high-tech extraterrestrial landing pad in Nevada to film what surely would be history's greatest event — the arrival of ET on Earth." This could explain MJ's propensity for plastic surgery: he must want to present the aliens with a familiar face when the momentous event finally happens.



Findings

The search for Chessie, Nessie, bigfoot, Chupacabra and other such 'hidden animals' is known as cryptozoology. The field is fueled not only by recurring but unproven reports of strange or anomalous creatures, but also by the well documented capture of previously unknown animals and the rediscovery of supposedly extinct species. Probably the most famous rediscovered animal is the coelacanth, a fish thought to have been extinct for 65 million years — until a living specimen was caught by native fishermen. More recently, the forests of Laos have been found to house several heretofore uncatalogued reptiles and

APOCALYPSE NOW?



Ever feel like things are falling apart? According to The Rapture Index, you could be right.

Using a combination of mathematical probability and Biblical prophecy, the Rapture Index seeks to discover the most likely time frame for Armageddon (while stopping short of making an actual prediction as to the exact day and hour.) Surveys are made in 45 different areas, including natural phenomenon, economic and political turmoil, and changes in the religious climate. Each area is assigned a numeric value — the higher the number, the worse the situation — and the combined total shows the speed with which

terminal events are falling into place.

The lowest, safest total of 50, recorded in December of 1993 indicated that events were at a standstill. The highest score was 164, in October of 1990, amidst a time of political upheaval. This year's Index is averaging about 120, with current trouble spots including arms build-up and bad weather.

The bottom line? Though the Rapture Index shows events moving steadily down the road toward the last days, the end isn't yet in sight. But if the Index goes above 180, watch out! You can check the numbers for yourself on the internet at <http://www.novia.net/~todd>.

mammals. One of the most startling, but least substantiated, area of cryptozoological study is the search for Mokele-Mbembe, a very large animal — possibly a dinosaur — said to live in the Congo.

The Big Hoax

The US never went to the moon, but the Nazis did — or so radical lunar theorists would have us believe.



According to R Rene, Bill Kaysing and others, NASA faked every moonlanding to bolster America's reputation and to hide the fact that the late JFK had set the country an unattainable goal. Quite a contrary opinion is held by

Vladimir Terziski, who believes not only that the Moon is capable of supporting human life, but that it has done so since 1945 when German rocket scientists created a colony. Did any of them realize, as 'scientists' Mikhail Vasin and Alexander Shcherbakov have, that the Moon is really a spaceship from another solar system? For more detail, check out these addresses:

R Rene, 31 Burgess Pl, Dept I, Passaic, NJ 07055

Vladimir Terziski, President, American Academy of Dissident Sciences, 10970 Ashton Ave #310, Los Angeles, CA90024

Ghost Train

Canada's Wonderland, an amusement park North of Toronto, is home of its own ghost. According to legend, a maintenance man was repairing the 'Thunder Run' when

CELEBRITY SIGHTING

Having been exposed to the mystical experience of dating a girl with ESP on screen in last year's British comedy *Solitaire for Two*, actor Mark Frankel admits that unexplained phenomena are not entirely new to him.

In his time the 32 year old London born actor — star of *Leon the Pig Farmer* and the US tv series *Sisters, Kindred the Embraced* and *Fortune Hunter* — has enjoyed a varied, some would say wild, youth which included the opportunity to travel the world.

"I was a very uncontrollable, wild kid," he agrees. "I got into lots of trouble, until I was into my early teens and basically had a great time doing it. It was anarchic behaviour but not in a vindictive way. I didn't beat people up or anything like that."

"These days it's controlled wildness, I like dangerous sports. I skydive, ride motorcycles and stuff like that, but I used to do more dangerous things as a child. I had a lot of accidents and spent months in hospital, I even had a motorcycle accident before I was legally allowed to ride one. I also had an accident with a javelin that put me in hospital for several months," he adds mysteriously, "but I don't want to go into that."

All of which might suggest that some form of concussion is behind Frankel's bizarre experience, but he remains convinced that he actually saw a ghost.

"When I was much younger I visited South Africa, and stayed at this old YMCA. I woke up in the middle of the night and saw two figures standing on the other side of the room. I was frozen with fear for about 15 minutes. It was probably five minutes in reality. I had enough time to check that I was awake, but there they were standing and looking at me, not moving, although they swayed a little bit."

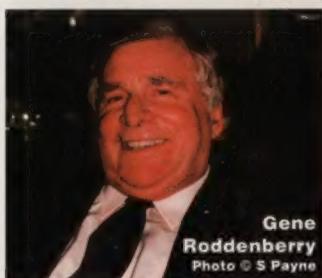
"One was very short, about three feet tall, and the other was a big guy holding a long staff. They had a kind of medieval costume on. Finally I plucked up the courage to run around them and switch the light on. At that they were gone."

Anwar Brett



launch and a commemorative video for survivors of the dear departed.

The ashes could stay in orbit for as long as a decade before re-entering Earth's atmosphere. Later this year, a special launch will carry the ashes of two Sixties pop-culture gurus, Gene Roddenberry and Timothy Leary, on a cosmic trip into the final frontier. This is actually the second space flight for Roddenberry; a portion of his remains once travelled aboard a space shuttle.



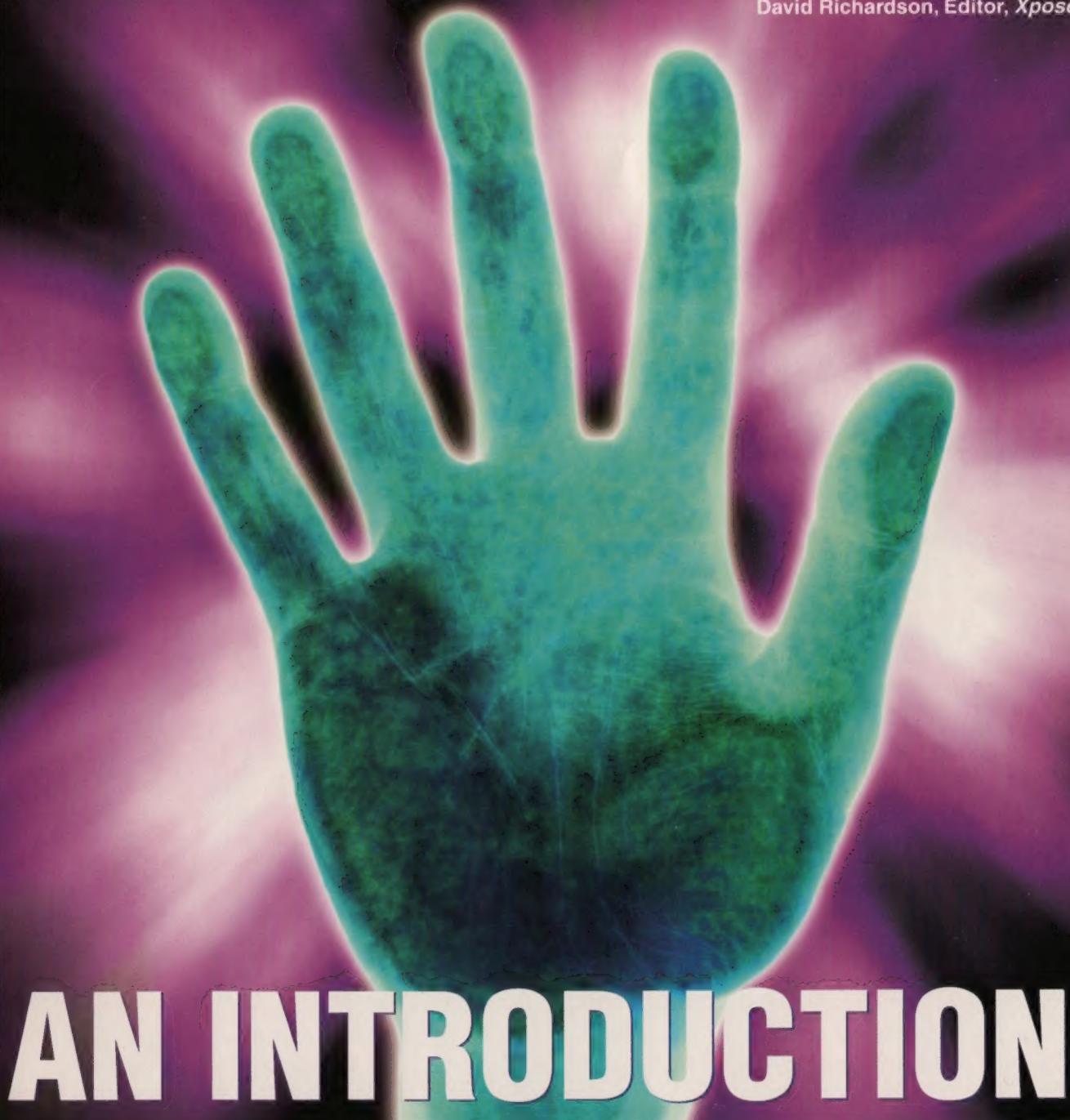
Gene Roddenberry
Photo © S Payne

The Final Frontier

Now you can pass on to the great beyond literally as well as figuratively. A Houston based company known as Celestis arranges space funerals, encasing up to seven grams of cremated remains into small aluminium containers for launch into orbit onboard a commercial satellite. A \$4,800 fee covers the cost of the

WHAT is *Xposé*? Firstly, I can tell you what it's not. It's not a hack tabloid, filled with stories about sightings of women with three breasts on Mars. Neither is it a stodgy journal that studiously examines incidents of the Paranormal — we're assuming that our readers like to enjoy themselves while learning about strange phenomena. *Xposé* is instead an entertainment magazine of the Paranormal. Sure, we'll be looking at UFO sightings, haunted houses, psychics, serial killers, alien abductions and all kinds of weird and wonderful events in detail. But rather than just restrict ourselves to real life, we're also taking on board films, books and television shows from the genre. Each issue of *Xposé* will be based around a theme. This month it's alien abductions; next issue we'll be looking at serial killers — and it's more than likely that a certain Hannibal Lecter will be prowling these pages. Let us know what you think of our début issue — letters will be gladly received at the editorial address, and the best will see print in our regular letters column. Also, if you've ever had a Paranormal experience — let us know. Readers' own stories will see print — and if you have any photos of your sightings of ghosts, UFOs or anything strange, we'd be delighted to receive them with a view to publication. In the meantime, keep watching the skies...

David Richardson, Editor, *Xposé*



AN INTRODUCTION

ELECTRICITY

Powder's Sean Patrick Flanery and director Victor Salva discuss the amazing tale. By Anwar Brett and Judy Sloane.

WITH Hollywood increasingly inclined to reduce every idea to the lowest common denominator, **Powder** has proved a remarkable exception to that reductive tendency.

A film about a reclusive, hairless albino teenager with mystical powers, a way with electricity and an intelligence beyond any measurable scale, it is a life affirming, spirit enhancing story that flies in the face of the shoot 'em up, sex and violence offerings with which audiences are constantly bombarded.

But it begs the question, how did such a film get made in the first place? Certainly its star, Sean Patrick Flanery, has been wondering the same thing.

"I'm sure they didn't say, 'okay, there's this pregnant woman and she's struck by lightning, and her offspring is this kid....'" Flanery smiles, almost unrecognizable with his more accustomed flesh tones and a full head of hair. "If the film-makers had said that then the studio would have told them to go and see Roger Corman or someone.

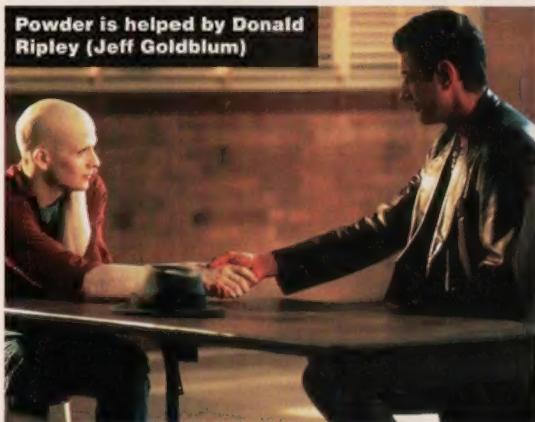
"But as soon as I read the script I knew that it could either be done as a beautiful story, or something really cheesy. After talking to everyone involved I realized they were dead serious, and they all had the same passion about it that I had. I think we all got together and made a beautiful film, and it's something I'm really proud of."

Despite five years of sustained television success behind him, playing the title role in **The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles**, the leap to feature films has nonetheless been a

big one for Flanery. But roles have come thick and fast, with **The Grass Harp** marking his débüt, rapidly followed by **Powder** and the black comedy **Spirit**.

"I am not at the stage where I get offered big studio films," he continues, "but I loved **Powder** and begged and pleaded to be cast. I was auditioned and won the role." From that point came the difficult task of infusing the character with as much internal make-up as external. The spirituality, shyness and demure genius are conveyed with subtlety and precision by Flanery, who had very definite ideas about the approach that he should take.

Powder is helped by Donald Ripley (Jeff Goldblum)



Powder is derided by the locals



"I certainly had an aesthetic in mind," he nods, "I wanted him to move in a certain way, to be very fluid and intentional in his movements. I wanted him to be very calculated and reserved, and for everything to happen for a reason."

As far as the external character, Flanery's main requirement was patience, as the make-up job would have tested the resolve of Powder himself.

"If it was only my head and hands exposed that day then it took about two or two and a half hours, but in some scenes where I was completely naked it took about five or five and a half hours

to apply the white make-up. They used an airbrush, but it was zero degrees when we were filming, and they had to leave the trailer door open while they applied it, so I would regularly freeze my ass off.

"I had stayed out of the sun for about two months before filming began, so I was really white anyway. I'd also done a lot of swimming in preparation, I was incredibly vascular with my veins showing through my skin. I shaved my head, and thought I still looked all right, but when I shaved my eyebrows there was definitely something wrong. I mean I would walk into a restaurant there would be double takes all round.

"So I always wore a knitted stocking cap, and some glasses with frames big enough to cover my eyebrows. I realized that it made me more comfortable for people not to stare at me, wondering what the hell was wrong, so I started hiding behind the cap and glasses."

If nothing else such experiences would have given Flanery an appreciation for

Sean Patrick Flanery as Jeremy Reed...
also known as Powder



the plight of his character, after he is found hidden away on his grandparent's farmhouse and brought for the first time into the harsh light of an unsympathetic world. His crime, in the eyes of the more vociferous locals is looking and acting differently from them. And that he certainly does, but in truth the spiritual nature of the character has echoes of two noted idols — Michael Jackson and Jesus Christ.

"I've heard the Michael Jackson comparison a lot," Flanery sighs with mild irritation. "It makes me feel that I haven't done my job if people can watch the film and be thinking of Michael Jackson. But there was absolutely no Michael Jackson thing there."

"As far as the character being Christ-like, obviously God created man in his own image, and the closer to perfection we get the closer we are to being Christ-like. Powder's on a completely different level, but he's by no means Jesus Christ. He is definitely a human being, but one who may have a thought train that is much more pure than other people. I think that is definitely true."

In the end that is the nice thing about *Powder*, the fact that is open to so much different interpretation from so many different angles. A human with such divine characteristics is a symbol of hope for us all — a film about such a character may even help redeem Hollywood's tarnished image — but above all the film raises as many questions as it answers.

Given the forces that exert such an influence on the film, such as the powerful lightning strike that supposedly imbues the unborn Powder with this incredible insight and these miraculous 'powers', it must all have left Flanery with a healthy respect for those forces that we cannot control.

"Any life experience teaches you something," he muses, "and I certainly took some things away from this film. It's very thought provoking, and it forces you not only to address certain issues but to look at things in a different way. It forced me to experience things quite differently."

So presumably it must all have been a little spooky when real lightning danced through the stormy Texas location, especially as in the film it tended to head straight for Powder.

"That part of the country is really prone to freak weather," Flanery smiles with Powder-like serenity, "there are lightning storms there like you've never seen, with so much electricity in the sky that it's unnerving. Things would be hit daily, not so much to cause an explosion but enough to ground itself and go away. It was all pretty bizarre," he adds, the smile turning into a laugh: "but I didn't take it personally."

FOR writer/director Victor Salva, the movie *Powder* is a culmination of ideas which have germinated over the years. The most prominent of these images, that prompted him to write the screenplay, occurred when he was in Napa Valley working on the sound edit for his low-budget Horror film *Clownhouse*. Taking a break to graciously get sodas for the crew, he spotted a weather-worn Victorian house with a teenage boy, with absolutely no hair, sweeping leaves off the porch.

"It was like a kid from outer space in a Victorian setting," Salva recalls. "It





Can Donald Ripley and Jessie Caldwell (Mary Steenburgen) save Powder

was like looking at Isaac Asimov meets Norman Rockwell — like worlds colliding." And so a remarkable character named Powder was born.

Affected in the womb when his mother is struck by lightning, Jeremy Reed comes into this world sporting a translucently white complexion and astonishing powers. Sheltered since birth in the dark basement of his grandparent's house, the young man, nicknamed Powder, must now come face to face with the prejudice of a narrow-minded community intolerant of anything out of the ordinary.

"You can say it's a movie about an underdog," says Salva, "but I can't think of anyone of us who is not an underdog in some way. I'm an un-



"I TOOK SOME THINGS AWAY FROM THIS... IT'S THOUGHT PROVOKING"

derdog. I'm a little guy who's getting to make movies now — we struggle through, trying to find our way, and that's basically how **Powder** came to be."

In defining this extraordinary character, Salva is quick to dismiss the widely perceived and believed notion that Jeremy Reed is an albino.

"He's not an albino," he states emphatically. "They describe him as one because that's the only explanation they have, but he's way beyond albino. He was nicknamed Powder by his grandmother because he was the color of her face powder."

Unfortunately, this piece of information was left on the cutting room floor. To Salva's chagrin, many such personal moments have been eliminated from the picture. When the movie first opened, critics and audiences alike queried the questionable plot point which had the newly discovered, and acutely sensitive, Powder being immediately placed in a school for troubled youths headed by a kindly social worker portrayed by Mary Steenburgen.

"All the scenes that explain why Powder is there, and why he has to stay there, and the precautions that Mary takes to protect him are on the cutting room floor," laments Salva. "She doesn't just plop him in this place and disappear. She explains to him that they have no records of him, and that he is technically a ward of the state until they can verify his age, saying, 'I know this place isn't right for you but you're going to have to wait a few days until we find something for you'... all that stuff kind of went away because no one wanted to watch two hours and 35 minutes of **Powder**. That's the sacrifice that had to be made. Movies lose 20 to 30 minutes before they come to your local theatre, and sometimes there are some minutes I think we can really

use, speaking as a film-maker."

The dichotomy of Powder's character, a blend of sincere human understanding coupled with a lethal power, is illustrated to perfection in a painful and poignant scene in which a deer is killed. Using his unique power, the young man shows the hunter the agonizing results of his actions.

"I always wanted to do a scene where a hunter would shoot a deer and then somehow live the experience of the deer, because I knew that would change what they did forever." As with all of his ideas, Salva filed that image away, and used it most appropriately in this movie.

Salva has been a film-maker since the age of 12 when he made his first home movie. When he was in high school, *Time* magazine came out with an article on *Jaws* and this 'kid' named Steven Spielberg who had made feature length movies as a child. This information elicited an instant response from the then would-be director.

"I said, 'Hey, that's me. I can be this guy.' I've never met Steven Spielberg, but I'm sure I'm not the only film-maker who had their head turned at that impressionable age and said, 'I can do that.'"

But despite the fact that his admiration for Spielberg has never waned, the constant referrals to the character of Powder as the human ET annoys the director. "I don't want my film compared to any film, even if it's a Steven Spielberg film. I'd like to think that **Powder** is its own voice. I'd like to think it's smarter and has an edge and has something to say. Not that **ET** is not a wonderful film, in fact if anyone has seen it a number of times it's probably me, but I don't think you'll ever find a film-maker who likes his films compared to someone else's films. It's like saying, 'All of your work has been to imitate this,'



and that's the last thing you want to hear."

After years of 'producing' movies at home, Salva's friends finally convinced him to enter one of his films, *Something in the Basement*, in a competition sponsored by Sony and the American Film Institute. The writer/director's evident talent was immediately recognized by Frances Coppola.

"I made the film in two days, with a home camcorder in my own backyard for \$200," admits Salva. "It was well told and very moving, much the same way **Powder** is. Frances Coppola called me on the phone and said, 'Did you make this movie for \$200 in two days?' I said, 'Yes,' and he said, 'I want you to come and see me and bring a script!' So, whatever he saw, I just thank God for it!"

The script he brought to the meeting was *Clownhouse*, a low budget Hor-

ror movie, that became the first feature for Coppola's fledgling company, Commercial Pictures.

"It was a tiny thriller about a boy who's terrified of clowns. He has to go to the circus one night with his brothers and then in one of the worst campfire story traditions, lunatics break out from an insane asylum, kill the real clowns, masquerade as clowns and follow the boys back home. It's a shameless campfire story, but it works in some little way. It was the first Horror movie to play at the Sundance Film Festival."

The director went on to helm the thriller, *Nature of the Beast*, for New Line Pictures, a genre that he now desires to dabble in again.

"I want to do a dark thriller," he admits. "**Powder's** light, and I always go back to dark. I don't want to do another emotionally draining one like **Powder**. I want to do a scary one now, and I'm working on something called **Blue People**. I have some fascination with color for some reason! It's about a psychologist who moves his practice to Phoenix and discovers that a lot of people there are not of this Earth, and are ready to take over because we are in such a state of chaos. When he tries to expose them, his practice falls apart because you wouldn't go to a therapist who says, 'I saw people land out on the desert who are not from this planet!' It's a UFO thriller, but it's got a very social head on its shoulders, and I hope it's really scary."

Powder achieved considerable box office receipts and garnered enough positive feedback to evoke suggestions of a sequel... suggestions that were not greeted enthusiastically by Salva. "People tell me it's wide open for a sequel, and this town operates on that kind of information. But would you think as much of **ET** if you saw '**ET's Adventures in the Bahamas**?'"

"I WANT TO DO A DARK THRILLER... I ALWAYS GO BACK TO DARK."

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OUT NOW!

THE X-FILES

An in-depth guide to Season One of Twentieth Century Fox's award-winning drama. By Jim Brooks.

THE 1993 Fall TV season began much as any other: a large pack of new series each competing just for survival past thirteen episodes. The situation was even less pleasant for new entries on the Fox network, which was still struggling for respectability. *The X-Files* began obscurely, but quickly built a strong word-of-mouth following that would keep it on the air. From the start, Chris Carter's creation also distinguished itself with an almost uniformly strong line-up of episodes whose quality garnered the kind of critical acclaim that Fox had never seen before.

Although UFOs, abductions, and the government's cover-up attempts formed the spine of the series, its scope encompasses a wide range of strange and paranormal subjects. What follows is a short overview of each episode, as well as a star rating from ★ (lowest) to ★★★★ (highest).

A1: THE X-FILES

(Pilot) ★★★

Written by Chris Carter
Directed by Robert Mandel



Assigned by the FBI to monitor his activities, Dana Scully begins her partnership with the brilliant, but unorthodox, Fox Mulder. Their first case involves a series of unexplained murders of teenagers in a small town in Oregon which Mulder immediately suspects may have connections of an extraterrestrial nature.

Surprisingly polished for a pilot, all the major ingredients that make the series what it is are in

place: Mulder's obsession with the hidden truth and the lingering wound of his sister's abduction, Scully's devotion to sceptical empiricism, and the ongoing government conspiracy to hide the presence of aliens on Earth. Just as important, Carter establishes one of the major elements of the show's dramatic tension, the platonic relationship between Scully and Mulder which at times seems to mask something deeper. The story does a great job of introducing *The X-Files*'s subject matter to a mainstream audience. Carter creates the necessary suspension of disbelief by laying the groundwork of credible doubt — what Mulder calls "extreme possibility" — that prevents *The X-Files* from spinning off into flights of fancy.

A2: DEEP THROAT ★★½

Written by Chris Carter
Directed by Daniel Sackheim



The first appearance of Mulder's mysterious source, 'Deep Throat', who begins the episode by warning Mulder away from the case of a vanished test pilot stationed at Ellens Air Force Base. The base is reputed to be the home of aircraft built using alien technology. The return of the test pilot, minus his memories, pushes Mulder to sneak onto the base where he is caught and catches a tantalizing glance of the alien plane. But when he is returned to Scully, every memory of the base's interior is wiped from his mind, leaving no supporting evidence for anything the

two agents have seen.

While not as on-target as later episodes, *Deep Throat* is remarkable for the characterization it creates of the government within a government which is an integral part of the show's core. We see that the forces responsible for hiding the truth are both brutal and merciless, acting completely outside the law.

A3. SQUEEZE

★★★

Written by Glen Morgan
and James Wong
Directed by Harry Longstreet



Scully and Mulder become involved in a series of seemingly impossible and bizarre murders that have a connection with a similar series of deaths occurring in 30-year cycles, stretching back nearly 100 years. The two agents come upon one Eugene Victor Tooms, with whom a number of pieces of evidence suggest a connection, not only with the current murders, but also the ancient ones as well. Mulder speculates that Tooms's metabolism places him in long periods of hibernation, broken by regular waking intervals during which he kills his victims. His victims' livers apparently serve as sustenance during the sleep period. With one murder to go in the cycle, the two agents barely capture Tooms before he goes back to ground, but not before he nearly makes Scully his last victim.

The third *X-Files* entry is the first to meet the full potential of the series. *Squeeze* is creepy and frightening, a tight script dressed with

stylish and moody direction. And Tooms himself provides a perfect adversary for Scully and Mulder as well as being a perfect embodiment of 'extreme possibilities'.

A4. CONDUIT

★★★

Written by Alex Gansa
and Howard Gordon
Directed by Daniel Sackheim



The apparent abduction of a teenage girl from a campsite holds a great deal of resonance for Mulder as he and Scully attempt to ascertain what really happened. Scully watches as Mulder identifies more and more with the family, especially the little brother who receives binary signals through the television. These signals form a portrait of the missing girl, leading Scully and Mulder back to the park where the original abduction occurred. There, they find the girl in bad physical condition. When Mulder tries to get her story, the mother forbids it, fearing the ridicule that would follow such disclosure.

Offering a deeper insight into what makes Mulder tick, this episode also effectively communicates his need for the truth by paralleling the abduction of his sister with that of the little girl. Although Scully frequently doubts Mulder's objectivity, the distance between them that the FBI watchdogs are counting on to discredit him melts somewhat as she sees the depth and reasons for his pain. The writing is first class, as most of the UFO 'arc' stories have proven to be.

**A sceptical Scully (Gillian Anderson)
is assigned to *The X-Files* with
Mulder (David Duchovny)**



A5. THE JERSEY DEVIL ★★★★

Written by Chris Carter
Directed by Joe Napolitano



Scully and Mulder investigate mutilation-murders near Atlantic City which bear a striking resemblance to both an old X-file and the folk-legend of the 'Jersey Devil'.

Another early episode dealing with subject matter besides UFOs and government conspiracy, Jersey Devil works as a moody monster story as well as a cautionary tale. As Mulder realizes that the creatures responsible for the deaths are actually some kind of feral humans, he sees that they have been pushed out of their natural habitat — the New Jersey woods — by the commercial concerns of 'civilized' humans. In this episode, the boundaries separating the Jersey Devils from their technologically superior cousins are blurred by the realization that while the primitives are forced to kill, modern people are no less destructive, only more encompassing. The episode ends on a heart-wrenching note that underscores our own lack of humanity.

6. SHADOWS ★

Written by Glen Morgan and James Wong
Directed by Michael Katleman



A young woman whose employer dies under suspicious circumstances seems to manifest psychokinetic abilities until Mulder and Scully discover she is actually being protected by the man's ghost.

A mediocre episode with a lackluster murder plot and X-Files 'MacGuffin'. Although

visually consistent with the emerging style of the show, the story idea lacks the inspiration illuminating most of the other episodes.

7. GHOST IN THE MACHINE ★★★

Written by Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon
Directed by Jerryll Freeman



Deus ex machina, but with a sinister twist. An advanced computer possessing artificial intelligence goes on a murder spree to protect its existence, killing Mulder's old partner in the process.

Besides being a clever play on the title of the book of the same name, this episode gives further insight into the pre-X-Files Mulder. We get another tantalizing glimpse of just how far from grace he has fallen to pursue the X-Files. The main story is an intriguing whodunnit with a satisfying resolution as Mulder and Scully make certain the government doesn't get its hands on dangerous technology which they would undoubtedly misuse.

8. ICE ★★★★

Written by Glen Morgan and James Wong
Directed by David Nutter



Scully and Mulder travel with a group of scientists to the North Pole to determine what went wrong in an isolated scientific installation. Once they arrive, an extra-terrestrial element introduced from ice-core samples turns the Quonset hut into a self-contained nightmare.

"We are not who we are..." A paranoid's worse nightmare, that one line neatly sums up this hom-

age to John W Campbell's original story *Who Goes There* (the source for two poor adaptations under the title *The Thing*). The script is tight, all muscle and bone, creating an air of tension and notching it up scene-by-scene. For the first time, the bond of trust between Scully and Mulder is not just frayed, but completely broken as the search for the possessed person turns each of the characters against each other. Three seasons down the line, this one remains one of the best.

9. SPACE 1/2

Written by Chris Carter
Directed by William Graham



Mulder and Scully are contacted by a NASA flight director following several unexplainable acts of sabotage against the shuttle program. The head flight director's erratic behavior leads to the conclusion that the damage is being done by an ethereal creature who invaded his body during a space-walk years ago.

From the sublime to the ridiculous. As low as *Ice* was high, this episode could best be described as *Poltergeist* from Outer Space. Although most episodes are built on far-out premises, this one is so ludicrous that it is impossible to take the story — or even the continuing characters — seriously. Given the high quality of the rest of the series, it may be that this was quickly written to meet a production deadline.

10. FALLEN ANGEL ★★1/2

Written by Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon
Directed by Larry Shaw



Mulder infiltrates a UFO crash site, only to begin a cat and mouse

game of cover-up with the commander of a special crash retrieval team that involves an abductee.

This episode's greatest charm comes not from the story itself, but from the UFO-chasing abductee, Max Fenig, and the relationship that springs up between him and Mulder. Max is literally certifiable and in the beginning Mulder reacts to him as such. But over the course of the episode, as Mulder discovers the hardships forced on Max by his abduction, the FBI agent develops a protective attitude toward Fenig.

11. EVE ★★★★

Written by Kenneth Biller and Chris Brancato
Directed by Fred Gerber



What starts out as a possible UFO incident, quickly turns into something even more insidious. Mulder and Scully stumble into the fallout of a secret government eugenics experiment gone very wrong.

Evil in a sweet package. A gem of a script, combined with outstanding performances by Harriet Harris as the adult Eve, make this another top-notch episode. The plotting is perfect, unfolding like clockwork, each new revelation coming at just the right time and the feeling of a very evil genie having been let out of the bottle completes the package.

12. FIRE ★★★★

Written by Chris Carter
Directed by Larry Shaw



A string of strange fiery deaths in Britain reach US shores where Mulder's university girlfriend, Phoebe Green, asks him to help protect an upper class family that narrowly escaped the same fate.

After a couple of strange occurrences, they discover the fires are being set by a stalker within the household, a man imbued with the power of pyrokinesis.

Another great script, rich with character development for the two principals. The reappearance of Mulder's old girlfriend as well as the revelation of his fear of fire give him even more dimension. Overcoming his fear of being burned by both presents him in an heroic light. We also see the first signs of the great undercurrent of affection between the partners, brought into sharp relief by Phoebe's attempt to revive her relationship with Mulder. And finally, this episode also has one of the best last lines.

13. BEYOND THE SEA ★★★★

Written by Glen Morgan and James Wong
Directed by David Nutter



Shortly after the death of Scully's father, Mulder is summoned to a North Carolina penitentiary by a death-row inmate put there by a profile Mulder created. The killer offers to lead the two agents to the man who kidnapped two college kids before they are killed if the two FBI agents help him avoid the gas chamber. In a change of roles, Scully believes the convict's claim of psychic insight while Mulder dismisses it. But Scully has a reason to believe—desperately seeking closure from her father's spirit.

A seminal episode for Scully and a *tour de force* acting job by Gillian Anderson, particularly shining in scenes shared with Brad Dourif. The main theme is belief, rendered in many layers. Not only the obvious question of the prisoner's psychic belief but there are shadings of religious belief as Scully grasps for some sign that her father exists in an afterlife. Her need to believe is also different from Mulder's. Whereas his is tinged with guilt, hers is more of an expression of love, a relationship lacking resolution. *Beyond the Sea* is one of the episodes that demonstrate the

willingness of the producers to take chances.

14. GENDERBENDER ★★

Written by Larry Barber and Paul Barber
Directed by Rob Bowman



The two FBI agents track down an escapee from an isolated religious community who kills with sex, transforming gender after each coupling.

Witness meets ET meets *Basic Instinct* or, as Mulder puts it: "The *Addams Family* gets religion." This moody, diffuse episode takes an interesting concept — death at the hand of purely sexual creatures — and fails to develop it, ending with a resolution that is really more of a dramatic *non sequitur*.

15. LAZARUS ★

Written by Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon
Directed by David Nutter



After a botched bank job, an FBI agent and the robber are shot fatally. The robber dies, but the agent — an old boyfriend of Scully's — is brought back... but not alone. It quickly becomes obvious to Mulder that the robber has returned in the agent's body.

In many ways, this episode fails for the same reason *Space* did. The suspension of disbelief that the show so carefully maintains derives from treating the Fantasy element with the same standard of logic it applies to the realistic elements. Here, there is no real attempt to ground the phenomenon of transference in anything nearing a rational, scientific explanation. The best Mulder can offer are

anecdotal accounts. The result is a story that is neither really compelling nor dramatically interesting.

16. YOUNG AT HEART ★★½

Written by Scott Kaufer and Chris Carter
Directed by Michael Lange



A cold-blooded murderer from Mulder's past apparently comes back from the dead, restored to youth by forbidden research. As he systematically kills those around Mulder, Fox must try to correct a decision he made years ago that allowed the killer to shoot a fellow FBI agent.

The paranormal element takes a back-seat to personal conflict as Mulder attempts to atone for a death he is convinced he could have prevented. This is the kind of story that has been done too many times on too many shows, but the writers and actors know their characters by now and make the story work.

17. E.B.E. ★★

Written by Glen Morgan and James Wong
Directed by William Graham



Mulder's need to believe is used against him in a game of lies and truth as he and Scully chase a captured EBE (extraterrestrial biological entity) across the country.

One of the more intensely paranoid of the series' episodes, Mulder and Scully are forced to peel back lies like onion skins. With Scully's help, Mulder sees that the truth can be as dangerous to his quest as the lies which always surround them. One of the most interesting truths (which may or may not be true, of course) is Deep Throat's admission that he

killed an alien and that his aid to Mulder is an attempt at atonement. Later episodes, of course, will suggest a more Earthbound connection.

18. MIRACLE MAN ★★

Written by Howard Gordon and Chris Carter
Directed by Michael Lange



What at first appears to be a simple case of murder amongst a sham healing ministry quickly turns into a drama of revenge and questions of faith which even Mulder is not immune to.

Mulder's need to find his sister leads to an atypical expression of his need to believe in extreme possibility. The fact that he is willing to entertain the veracity of the preacher's claims adds a religious dimension to what he is willing to accept, making an interesting diversion from the series predominantly secular focus.

19. SHAPES ★★½

Written by Marilyn Osborn
Directed by David Nutter



Death by apparent animal attack draws Mulder to a Native American reservation where the evidence rapidly points to a were-wolf.

Hardly a fresh or unique idea in entertainment, the treatment of shapeshifting or lycanthropy makes the episode interesting. The Native Americans' resentment at the appearance of the white agents from Washington lends an edge to the proceedings and a contemporary perspective that fuels the conflict between Scully's empirical rationality and the inherent anti-rationalism that is the fiber of legend and belief.

FBI agents in search
of the truth...



20. DARKNESS

FALLS

Written by Chris Carter

Directed by Joe Napolitano



Scully and Mulder head to the deep forest after an entire camp of loggers disappears. Caught in the middle of a battle between the logging company and guerrilla eco-terrorists, the two FBI agents quickly discover that their worst enemy — and the true cause of the disappearance — is a swarm of ancient insects unleashed from the center of a 500-year-old tree.

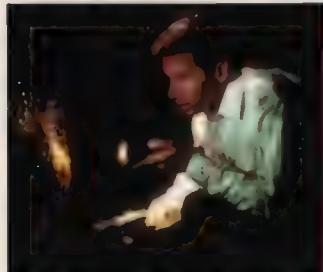
An ecological cautionary tale, painted in broad strokes of fear. Mankind pays for killing the trees and the price is a horrible one visited even on the terrorist trying to save the forest. A strong psychological thread runs through the episode as well. The fear of the dark that every child feels is pulled from the imagination and made material with the setting of the sun and the coming of the insects. Scully's reaction to finding the bugs swarming over her underscores the fear that prefaces the story. And one of the final images — that of the two main characters being cocooned — reinforces that dread.

21. TOOMS

Written by Glen Morgan

and James Wong

Directed by David Nutter



After Eugene Tooms is released from the mental hospital, Mulder and Scully maintain an unauthorized surveillance to prevent him from taking the last victim of his cycle and vanishing for another 30 years.

To date, this is the only direct sequel to a 'stand-alone' episode (one of those not continuing the overall Mulder/UFO/cover-up

story arc). Doug Hutchison turns in an effectively creepy performance as he did in *Squeeze* and the script allows him to add an element of deliberation and revenge to a creature that previously might have been taken as simply cunning, driven by instinct. The episode also offers one of the first overt teases that perhaps Mulder and Scully are hiding deeper feelings for each other, a subtext that the producer's have wisely kept unconsummated.

22. BORN AGAIN

★★

Written by Alex Gansa
and Howard Gordon
Directed by Jerry Freeman



Scully and Mulder are called in to investigate the apparent suicide of a Buffalo police detective. The fact that his partner believes the man incapable of killing himself is only one factor indicating strange circumstances. The other — and much more compelling one for Mulder — is the fact that the 200 pound man was thrown through the window of a room whose only other occupant was a 60 pound, eight-year-old girl. Mulder begins to suspect that the girl is the reincarnation of a police officer whose partners killed him nine years before.

Although not a standout, this episode is enjoyable and well-done, aided by the supporting structure of a criminal mystery for the agents to solve in addition to the psychic one.

23. ROLAND

★★★

Written by Chris Ruppenthal
Directed by David Nutter



The deaths of two scientists on a top secret propulsion project un-

der what seem impossible conditions draws Scully and Mulder into the world of a retarded man. The man, Roland, acts as janitor at the lab and is the only person who might have had access to the scene at the times of the murders. The discovery that Roland and the chief scientist (whose head is cryogenically suspended nearby) were twins suggests a psychic bond that suggests how Roland was able to commit the killings. Using that bond, Roland's brother forces Roland to seek revenge against the colleagues he felt had taken all the credit for his work.

An especially touching episode. In the course of solving the case and preventing any further killing, Mulder and Scully are pulled into helping Roland, an innocent man with the sweetness and purity of a child, tortured by the acts of violence he's forced to commit. Zeljko Ivanek is perfect as Roland; his impeccable performance as a mentally retarded adult is only exceeded by the amount of pathos he imbues the role with without edging into syrup.

24. THE ERLENMEYER FLASK

★★★

Written by Chris Carter
Directed by RW Goodwin



A man chased by the Baltimore Police eludes capture after having been shot by jumping into the bay and disappearing. A call from Deep Throat brings the two FBI agents into the scene, sweetened by the promise that this is the biggest thing they've ever come close to. Clues lead them to a doctor doing secret research with alien DNA, specifically the combination of extraterrestrial genetic material with that of human beings. Mulder uncovers a storage room filled with five tanks containing dormant, but living, human bodies, all breathing underwater. Although all trace of the bodies is quickly removed, Mulder tracks down the fugitive who has hidden at the bottom of the bay, courtesy of alien gene therapy. But just as he is about to offer the man help, a group of

government operatives arrive. Shooting the fugitive dead, gases released by the man's wounds incapacitate Mulder, making it easy for the spooks to take him away. Finding out about the kidnapping, Deep Throat suggests a way to get Mulder back: with the older man's help, Scully will steal the original source of the DNA — an alien embryo. But when the exchange is made, one of the operatives kills Deep Throat. In the aftermath, the two agents are reassigned to different departments and the X-Files are closed down...

Easily one of the best episodes, the action and pace are relentless. In his final living appearance, Deep Throat holds out the promise of the Holy Grail to Mulder, a Grail representing a truth that kills as easily as it enlightens. In 45 minutes, Chris Carter manages to bring his series to a crescendo, then smash it to pieces, taking the kind of risk that will characterize the rest of the series and set it apart from most other prime time fare. Thus, the stage is set to invent the series all over again...

RIP IT UP AND START AGAIN



The X-Files's first season describes a wide arc, gathering speed as it goes. Although the focus of the show is the case of the week, what makes the series click is the ever-unfolding relationship of the two main characters and their continuing backstory as it relates to the overall background of conspiracy and extraterrestrial presence. Of course, a huge element of this is the continuing willingness of the producers to forego the dramatic easy road. Whereas an institutionalized show like one of the 80's-90's vintage *Star Trek* series might consider changing a character's costume or hairstyle a tremendous risk, Chris Carter and his crew reach deep into the heart of their show and characters and are unafraid to rip everything out and rebuild anew. It is precisely this approach that allows a show with a certain limited subject matter to remain fresh and interesting.

The ultimate guide to Cult TV for the month

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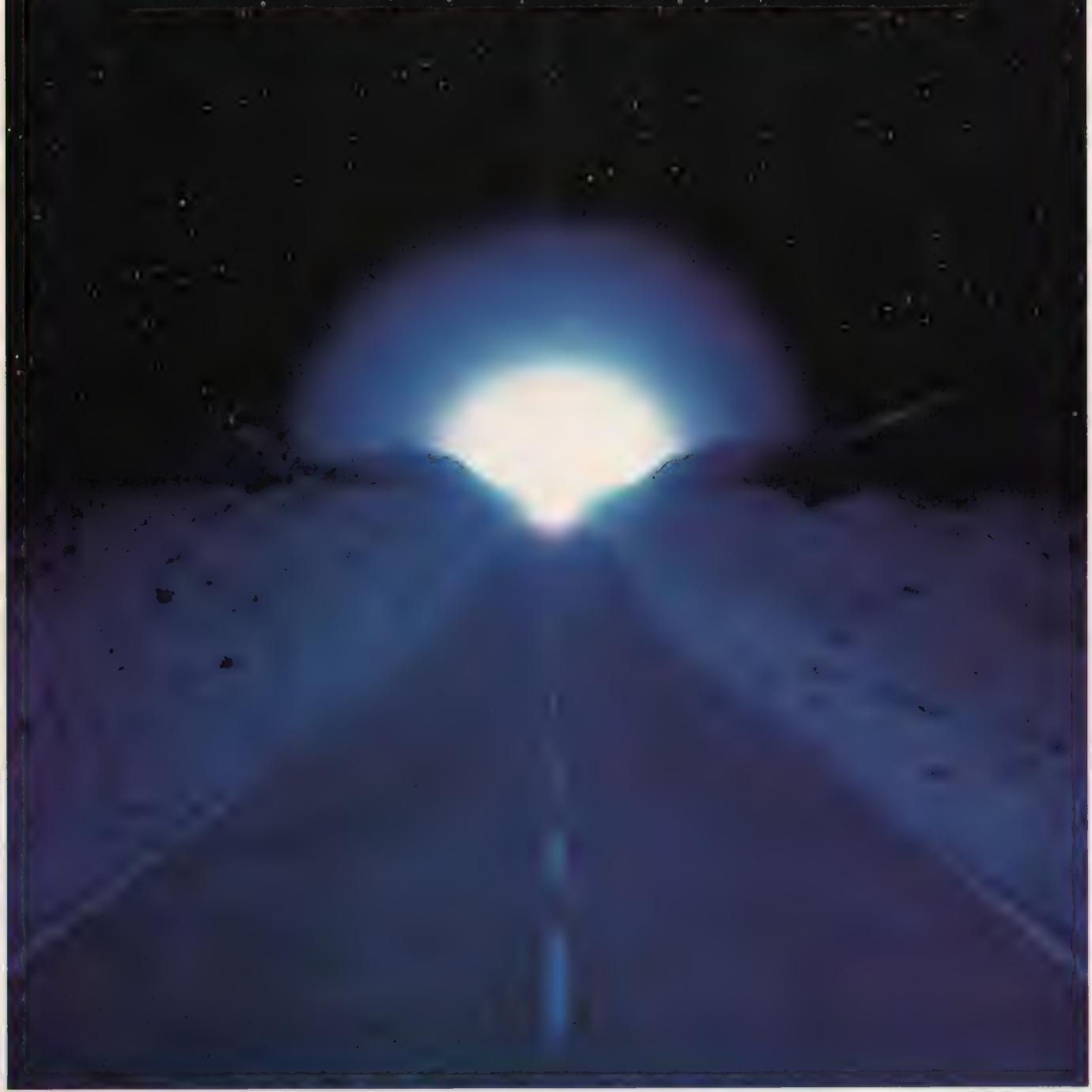
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ABDUCTIONS

***Xposé* examines the phenomenon of alien abductions —
both in the real world and in films and television...**



SKYWATCH

Stacey McGee of the UFO Information Research Center discusses alien visitations. By Lowell Cunningham.

THE WEATHER was ominous as *Xposé* drove to the rendezvous. A series of thunderstorms raged through the Appalachian foothills, darkening and dampening the long Memorial Day weekend. Accidents dotted the highway and power outages were commonplace. An auspicious prelude for an interview with UFO enthusiast Stacey McGee, founder and national director of the United States UFO Information Research Center.

Xposé met McGee during a calm in the storm, settling down for a chat in the picturesque gazebo of a well-kept courtyard. Though McGee is 26, he appears several years younger.

As a child he had aspired to be a minister and still has a calm intensity which would have served him well in that calling. Now McGee works with a removal company and uses his free time to pursue his primary interest — UFOs.

His fascination began when he was 10 years old and witnessed a UFO while waiting for his school bus to arrive. This is how he describes the ship, which he witnessed from the back seat of his mother's car: "It was a diamond-shaped object which appeared to me to be multi-faceted. It had beautiful colors and at any one point there were three or four different colors which seemed to oscillate or change from place to place on the craft. It had depth and dimension to it."

Though he can't explain why, McGee's attention seemed to have been drawn to the craft. "I don't know what made me turn and look out the back window. I looked right at it, as if I knew what I was looking for and I knew exactly where it would be," he says, noting that he was the only witness to the event.

"I remember how beautiful it was and thinking to myself, 'What is that?' As soon as that went through my head, this object began to shift in the sky, almost as if it were in tune with my thoughts. It started to move in an undulating figure eight motion."

The aerial acrobatics didn't last long, however.

"As soon as another question went through my mind — 'What could it be?' — it shot off across the sky at an unbelievable rate. It didn't gradually accelerate into motion, one instant it was there, the next instant it was a streak across the sky and it disappeared into the morning twilight."

Though the ship disappeared, a vivid memory remains, affecting McGee even now.

McGee seems to see his experience as positive, so how does he feel about extraterrestrial encounters in general.

"There is evidence to indicate that contact with extraterrestrial beings is both negative and positive; some beings are positive and others are negative," he tells *Xposé*.

Is he referring to the actions of individual aliens or entire alien species? "That's hard to say. Just as there are many factions of humanity who serve different purposes and agendas, that's probably true of alien races as well. There are very different creatures that are reported by abductees around the world."

In the US, at least, the aliens known as 'Greys' are most frequently associated with abductions, and they are typically described as aloof and technological. However, McGee is not so quick to agree.

"It's a very broad statement to say the Greys are this way or the Greys are that way. There are abductees that report very tremendously positive encounters with the Greys, where they learn a great deal of information from them while on board the ship. They come back with a feeling that their experiences have helped them become more aware of the Earth, of themselves, of our species. There are others that seem to indicate that the Greys are solely functioning for their own benefit, using techniques that don't seem to be respectful of the person that they're investigating."

The more negative encounters are unwelcome and invasive, McGee says.





A UFO photographed by Paul Vila near Albuquerque, New Mexico. Photo courtesy Amalgamated Flying Saucer Club of America, PO Box 20, Yucca Valley, CA 92248

"It would be like females being impregnated with human-alien hybrid babies, being made to carry these babies for the duration of their pregnancy, then being taken and violated again for the babies to be removed. That, of course, is a very intrusive thing which creates a lot of feeling."

It's this sort of encounter, McGee believes, which builds on the media-fed fear that began with the broadcast of Orson Welles's **War of the Worlds** radio program. McGee, through the United States UFO Research Center, hopes to alleviate some of this fear and inform people of some of the positive aspects of the abduction phenomenon.

"People must understand that they do not have to fear every alien being or encounter."

McGee believes that aliens have been visiting Earth for thousands of years.

"They've had a hand in the actual evolution — biological, mental and spiritual — of the human race, and perhaps they come to check on us from time to time. I think perhaps they do have selfish intent, but I think in the long run it will prove to be mutually beneficial for both us and them."

The study of UFOs will also be vital to mankind's future.

"As the awareness of mankind progresses and we learn about this phenomenon, things won't be as weird as they once were. When we accept things, they become less strange to us."

Acceptance is a watchword with McGee and the Research Center, because an open attitude is important in encouraging UFO witnesses and abductees to come forward.

"We don't hold fast to any philosophy. We keep an open mind and allow people to express themselves in whatever way they feel is right for them and what is the truth in their heart."

People from all professions have sighted UFOs.

"Lawyers, doctors, presidents, businessmen, military leaders, airline pilots, astronauts — these occupations all have a certain level of credibility that you cannot dispute easily."

The Center doesn't expect every UFO report to be made by a college graduate, however.

"If the person does have education, this adds credibility to the report, but we do not feel that the credibility is lessened otherwise. We feel that anybody whose testimony

"IT WAS A DIAMOND-SHAPED OBJECT WHICH APPEARED MULTI-FACETED."

UFOs: A MINI-HISTORY

THE PHENOMENON of unidentified flying objects has been a puzzling part of history for hundreds of years. One of the first sightings to be chronicled took place in Cloera, England, in 1211 AD. But it wasn't until the mid-1800s that UFOs began appearing on a more regular basis.

On June 18, 1853, students attending Burritt College in Tennessee spotted two luminous objects streaking across the sky. Only seven years later the city of Wilmington, Delaware, was permeated in a blue light and four UFOs were sighted by the startled residents. These incidents continued for many years, when a seeming lull in the activity took place.

But during World War II accounts of mysterious flying objects increased dramatically, reported from both military and civilian pilots. Perhaps the most infamous UFO incident occurred in 1947 when debris, first reported to be a crashed alien space craft, was found in Corona, New Mexico. Only a few hours later in an attempt to cover up the discovery, the Pentagon ordered another statement released dismissing the whole affair as a fallen weather balloon. The mystery of Roswell (named after the local air force base that investigated, and covered-up the encounter) was not brought to light until the mid-1970s when the truth finally was revealed... not only had an alien craft

Alien visitations... Photo courtesy Amalgamated Flying Saucer Clubs of America, PO Box 39, Yucca Valley, CA 92266



crashed to Earth, but the remains of four extraterrestrial beings were recovered.

With the arrival of UFOs, it only stands to reason alien abductions would follow, and the most famous of these occurred in New Hampshire on September 19, 1961 to an unfortunate couple named Betty and Barney Hill. They were driving down a deserted highway when they noticed a pancake-shaped craft hovering in the sky, which proceeded to follow them. For some unexplained reason, the Hills became sleepy and the next thing they remember, it was two hours later. It was only after a succession of distressing dreams that through hypnosis their experience on the space craft came to light.

Many sightings, some say as many as 90 percent, are ultimately identified as bright planets and stars, meteors, satellites, aerial flares and aircraft. But the other 10 percent can't be dismissed quite so easily. Some of the famous people who have reported seeing UFOs include former presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, astronaut Gordon Cooper, John Lennon and Muhammad Ali.

Over the years, scientists have sent out signals, searching the skies for extraterrestrial beings. It seems the obvious reason for all these sightings are... we invited them.

Judy Sloane

They're here... Photo courtesy Amalgamated Flying Saucer Clubs of America, PO Box 39, Yucca Valley, CA 92266





Mysterious crop circles in Wiltshire, England
Courtesy: Mary Evans Picture Library/OT Mission

would put a man in prison for life is credible enough to stand by their own word of honour that something very tremendous happened in their life."

This doesn't mean, of course, that every report is genuine. "Over 70,000 reports come into UFO organizations around the world every year," McGee acknowledges. "One out of 10 of these sightings might prove to be extraterrestrial and quite possibly more than that. I think some degree of scepticism is prudent and needful because there has to be some weeding out of the weirdoes. You have to maintain a very strong foothold in reality and explore the other possible realities that we know very little about."

Still, McGee feels that scepticism can be overdone.

"Some people's is such that they will not accept the evidence that is there before they reach their conclusions. It's up to each individual to find the truth in their heart."

McGee points to a number of sources as evidence of the validity of the UFO experience. Crop circles, for example, are "inexplicable markings that are left in the crops of England and around the world. They seem to be some type of writing that is beyond our comprehension. That's entirely

conjecture, but these markings are having an affect on people and the awareness of humanity."

Another set of markings that lead to speculation concerning UFOs are the Nazca lines, which McGee describes as "indentations in the earth that cause a lot of controversy about their origin and purpose, but can only be seen in their entirety from the air." McGee also mentions the Piri Reis maps which are "more accurate than some of our maps today", and show Antarctica years before it was discovered.

X-posé mentions the very well-publicized 'alien autopsy' video, curious about McGee's attitude to a film widely considered to be a hoax.

"I'm not saying that there's *not* any truth to it. My inner feelings tell me there is, but you have to be able to weed out what's true and what's not. When I watch the footage, I do not get the feeling that I'm looking at a being. I get the feeling I'm looking at a fabricated lump of something, a mannequin, a representation of something that might be real."

This feeling leads McGee to speculate that the video could be disinformation.

"[THERE ARE] OVER 70,000 REPORTS AROUND THE WORLD EVERY YEAR."

PREPARE FOR CONTACT

IF YOU WANT to accurately record a UFO sighting, you need to learn proper procedure and terminology. A few simple steps and key expressions will add credibility and precision to your report and set you apart from the crackpots and sensationalists which plague serious investigators of the paranormal.

First, remain as calm and objective as possible during any suspected extraterrestrial encounter. Make meticulous notes and get statements from any other witnesses. Use any recording devices you might have, especially video or still cameras. If you don't have a camera, make sketches while the incident is still fresh in your mind. Finally, you might choose to share your report with others, though you must be prepared for ridicule or disbelief, especially from police or other authority figures.

When describing the incident, use terms devised by a respected UFO researcher such as J Allen Hynek. Though certainly not the only encounter scale, Hynek's system is probably the best known and most widely used. These are the most important words and phrases from that system.

★ If you see an unexplained glow in the sky, you've witnessed a 'nocturnal light', sometimes called a 'distant encounter of the first kind'. Should you be close enough to the light to discern a structure, the sighting is a 'nocturnal disc', whether or not the object is actually disc-shaped.

★ The daytime appearance of a UFO of any shape would be referred to as a 'daylight disc' or 'distant encounter of the second kind'.

★ When the UFO is also present on radar, the incident is called a 'radar visual case' or 'distant encounter of the third kind'.

★ Hynek's scale focuses on the proximity of the unusual phenomena and the witness, moving from distant encounters to close encounters. If you're within 150 yards of an alien ship, the event is upgraded to a 'Close Encounter of the First Kind' or CE1.

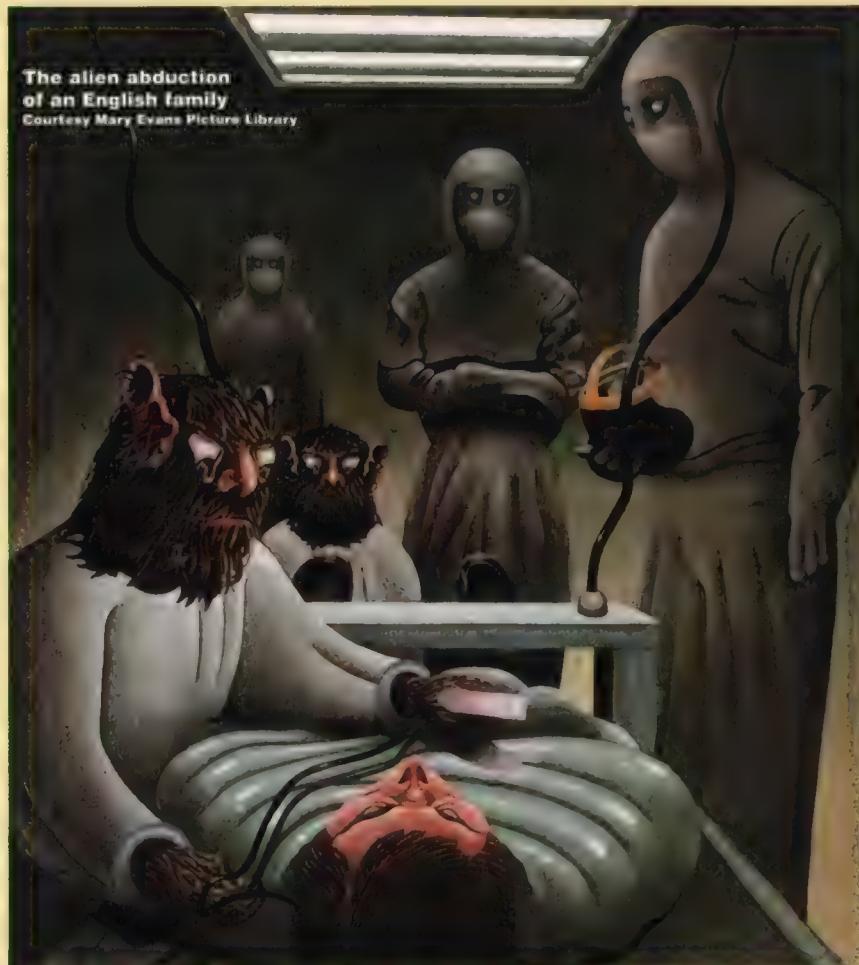
★ Physical evidence of a UFO constitutes a 'Close Encounter of the Second Kind' or CE2. A common physical sign would be a landing ring, such as a burn circle or indentation in the soil. Another form of CE2 is the presence of unexplained or unidentifiable substances, especially technological artifacts which would imply the activity of an intelligent being.

★ The most intimate level on the Hynek scale is 'Close Encounter of the Third Kind' or CE3, the designation which later became the title of Steven Spielberg's film. Simply put, it's the sighting of an actual extraterrestrial entity.

Perhaps Hynek saw no reason to further refine his scale since only 1% of the reports he studied reached this degree. As UFO reports have become more common and more involved, however, researchers have added to Hynek's encounter system. Commonly, a 'Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind' refers to an abduction of a human by ETs. Communication or other direct contact between humans and aliens would be a 'Close Encounter of the Fifth Kind'.

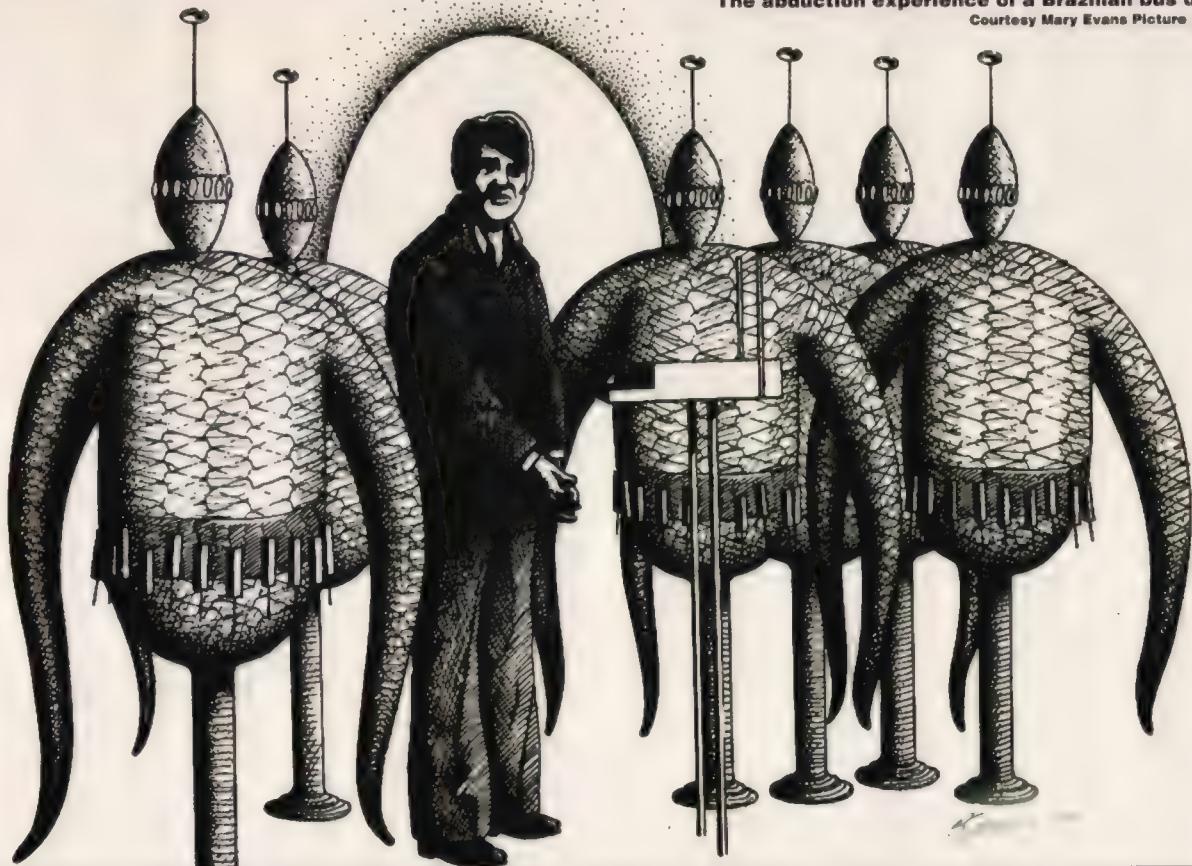
Even though you now know how to report otherworldly contact, you might want to think twice before rushing out on a saucer hunt — what you're looking for might just be looking for you.

Lowell Cunningham



The alien abduction
of an English family
Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library

The abduction experience of a Brazilian bus driver
Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library



"One of the modus operandi our government has utilized to maintain the cover-up for many years is to allow some information to get out but to color it with disinformation so people don't know what to believe. I think this is a good example of that. To get people thinking about the subject and just give them enough information to whet their appetite, but not enough to make informed decisions."

McGee and the Center consequently choose not to dwell much on the autopsy film.

"We try to concentrate on the live beings, not the dead ones."

The Center's focus comes in the form of monthly meetings, support groups and a newsletter.

"Whether you've seen a UFO or not, you can become involved with the phenomenon simply by coming to a meeting and learning more about it. You'll usually find either video presentations of educational value or guest speakers who have information about the latest area sightings. People gain a lot from the sharing, and I think that's important, to feel that you can tell what's happened to you to another person without disbelief and ridicule."

The Center's newsletter is *Skywatch: The Encounters Report*, which McGee describes as a media through which "we are able to link together all our network supporters and members across the world and keep them informed of the latest sightings and abduction reports that are given to us at the Center."

Skywatch avoids conjecture, preferring to focus on verbatim accounts.

"We feel the public should be left to form their own conclusions without the comment of others." McGee also adds that the Center is a non-profit organization. "My encouragement would be for people to pursue this not as an opportunity to increase their financial status, but rather their emotional, spiritual and mental status."

Interested parties can reach Stacey McGee and the United States UFO Information and Research Center at:
PO Box 3005 CRS
Johnson City, TN 37602

Or, you can call the sightings and information hotline at
423-743-2100.

"WHETHER YOU'VE SEEN A UFO OR NOT, YOU CAN BECOME INVOLVED."

ASCENSION

In 1975, the alien abduction of Travis Walton was witnessed by Mike Rogers. They tell Judy Sloane their harrowing tale...

IT ONLY takes one significant moment for a person's life to change irrevocably — for Travis Walton, that moment occurred at approximately 6:10 pm on November 5th, 1975. Returning home with six other loggers from a hard day's work high in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Walton noticed a strange glow filtering through the trees.

"Everyone was talking away, and one by one they fell silent and started looking in the direction I was looking," he recalls. "It wasn't too long before somebody made the comment, 'What's that?' We were catching little glimpses of light, but it was bright enough that we knew there was something out of place."

The truck drove around the thick trees which hugged the road, reaching the clearing at the crest of the ridge — wham, there it was. "It was unmistakable," says Walton. "Less than 100 feet away... a distinct mechanical object hovering. One of the guys yelled out, 'It's a flying saucer,' and someone else yelled, 'Stop the truck.'"

Mike Rogers, the loggers' foreman and Travis Walton's best friend, who was steering the vehicle, didn't observe the space craft at first because he was on the left side of the truck. As he slowed to a stop, he leaned forward and glanced up through the windshield to see the object which was eliciting all the commotion from his fellow-workers.

"It struck me right off as being beautiful," Rogers reflects. "It was down in the trees, rather large for the space it was in, and it didn't look like it had a lot of maneuverability room. It was circular and it had a UFO look to it — two pie-pans put lip to lip... that general shape. There were no seams — it was very metallic.

"What made it beautiful to me, I think, was the way the unpolished metal surface reflected all the scenery around it, the trees and the ground, and the top of it was reflecting the dark sky and the stars. The parts that were glowing looked almost like windows, but they weren't windows for you couldn't see through them. It was like the whole object was a solid metal, but something inside was bright enough that it was actually glowing through the metal."

To the disbelief of the other loggers, Travis jumped out of the vehicle in order to get a closer look at the space craft. He had displayed this type of impulsive behavior all of this life. Only a few months prior to this close encounter of the third kind, Walton and Rogers, travelling in the same truck, were on their way to a different work site in the woods, when a bear ran across their path.

"No sooner than the truck had stopped, Travis was out the door chasing this bear!" says Rogers. "He was always extremely curious, he wanted to know about everything. He knew that the only way you can see certain things, especially in the woods, is if you



got there quick and not waste any time."

Walton admits his first reaction on observing the craft was, "I have to see this before it gets away."

Despite the fact the loggers were screaming at him to get back in the truck, Walton kept edging his way toward the UFO until he was practically beneath it.

"It wasn't scary at first, it just looked imposing," explains Rogers. "There was a real subtle movement to it, but it didn't seem to be making any sound at all. When Travis got up underneath it, it started moving in a slow, circular, rocking motion, and it continued to do that more rapidly. Also there was a high-pitched sound that started up that went from inaudible to very, very loud. The sound got so loud a rumbling started, a vibration that was so low it shook the ground, and it was shaking the truck. That's what made it terrifying."

"In fact, it scared Travis and he jumped down by a log that was sticking out of a pile of brush. But the log didn't offer him any cover. He was only there a couple of seconds and he stood up in a turning motion — you could tell he was headed back to the truck.

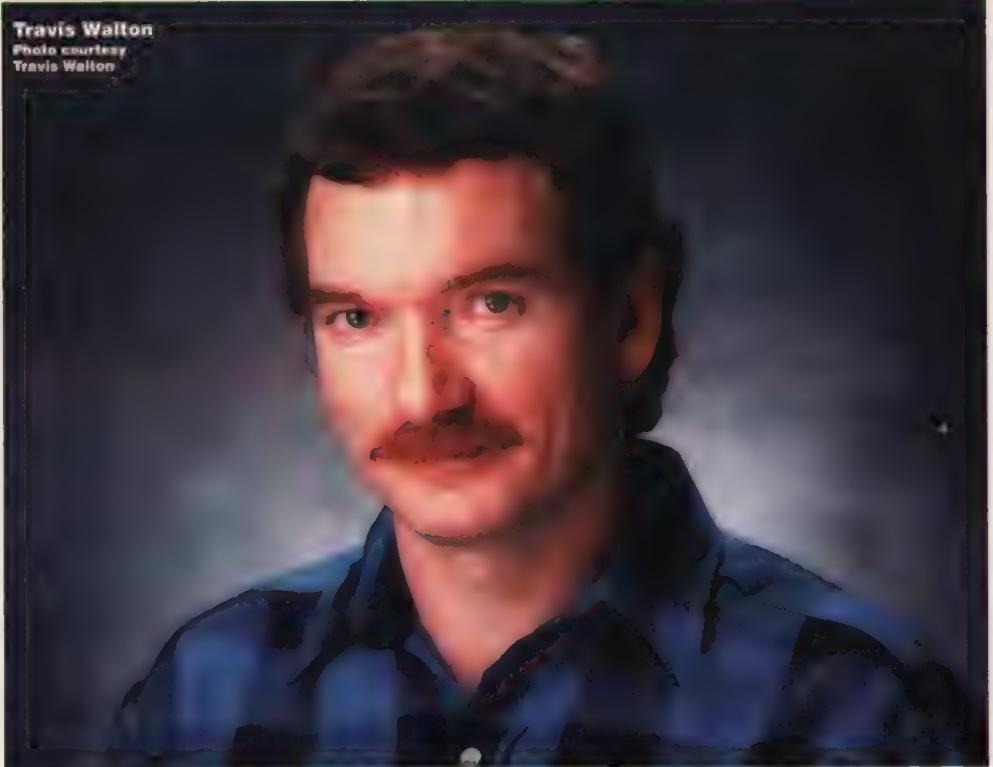
"Right at that moment, I turned the truck back on and I saw this brilliant flash out at the trees, a blinding blue-green light. I snapped my head back around and looked in that direction. Travis seemed to be enveloped in this brilliant light and he was airborne, being blown backwards. I watched him fall about 10 feet from where he was standing."

Walton doesn't remember seeing the light, but he does recall feeling it.

"It was quite a strange sort of shock. It was like an electrical shock in a way, but it was like a physical blow too. They said it just threw me in the air and then I landed limp, so they figured it had killed me."

In total panic, urged on by the other loggers, Rogers pulled the truck out of the clearing and drove at break-neck speed down the road convinced the craft would follow them. A quarter of a mile away they stopped engrossed in an incoherent barrage of hysteria.

Travis Walton
Photo courtesy
Travis Walton



"We were all yelling at each other," recalls Rogers. "It was the first time any of us saw such a thing. Something happened that was so scary and so horrifying that we were all in a panic, trying to make sense of what was going on, but we couldn't because there was nothing in real life to relate it to."

As the 'discussion' continued, Rogers insisted they return to the clearing to find out exactly what had happened to Travis. Suddenly, he saw the craft take off.

"It moved really fast, literally a streak upwards towards the north east."

When the loggers arrived at the clearing there was no sign of Travis. Rogers took out his flashlight in an attempt to discern any footprints that would indicate Walton's escape, but he could only find the prints made when Travis left the truck heading toward the space craft. In dismay the terrified group were now faced with another disturbing dilemma — explaining Walton's disappearance to the police and to his family.

To this day, Travis Walton has no idea exactly how long it was before he regained consciousness.

"When I first woke up, I didn't feel much panic because I came to kind of slowly. I didn't know where I was. I didn't even know that I should wonder where I was because at first I was just so groggy and sort of half-conscious. Then I remembered the incident in the woods, and going to the

"I SAW THIS BRILLIANT FLASH, A BLINDING BLUE-GREEN LIGHT..."

"THEY SEEMED HUGE TO ME... I WAS DESPARATE TO FIND A WAY OUT."

craft, and feeling like something hit me. So, at first, I assumed that I'd been hurt and I'd been taken to a hospital. I heard the sounds of movement around me and an instrument on my chest. I was just trying to lay still and not cause problems for myself."

The room was very hot and humid. As Walton's vision gradually improved, he noticed the assembled 'doctors' were wearing "unusual orange-colored surgical gowns."

His sight now fully restored, he realized exactly where he was... inside of the space craft, staring into the eyes of an alien.

"They seemed huge to me. They were the most dramatic part of the experience, not just the look of their eyes... it was the gaze. It's hard to describe, the best painting doesn't communicate this feeling you get looking into the eyes of something conscious and intelligent."

In a state of hysteria, Walton pushed the alien away and managed, even in his weakened condition, to get to his feet. Looking around for anything that resembled a weapon, he grabbed a thin transparent cylinder from a nearby bench and flailed it around to keep the three creatures at arm's length, but they kept coming toward him with outstretched hands.

Walton crouched against the wall in terror. Remaining silent, the aliens intensely watched him. They were a little

under five feet, with skin so pale it bordered on translucent, their bald heads larger than their bodies. Walton, spotting a nearby door, wondered if he could push his way past them to freedom. But just as this scheme unfolded in his mind, the three aliens abruptly left the room. Alone, Walton perused the interior.

"It was very plain and rather featureless," he recalls. "I imagine part of that was my total hysteria. I was just so totally panicked that I might not have been picking up details that might have been there. I don't recall lots of little features. It seemed to be quite plain and without ornate-
tations."

In keeping with the impulsive behavior he displayed at the landing site, which got him into this dilemma, Walton decided to leave the room and search the ship for a means to escape.

"I was just so terrified that they would come back," he says, "I left there because I thought, 'At least if I can find a way out, I can get away.' But I had mixed feelings. As I ran down the hallway it was small and cramped and dimly lit, and it was curving so tightly that I couldn't see if they were behind me, or see if there was anyone ahead of me. It was a very claustrophobic, panicked sort of feeling. I was desperate to find a way out."

Coming across another open doorway, Walton looked inside. The room was totally empty except for a single chair which was facing away from him. As he slowly approached the chair he noticed the room getting darker and small points of light began appearing on or filtering through the walls, even the floor, until he was surrounded by stars. Sitting on the chair, he began fiddling with the controls that were built into the arms, hoping they might finally open a door to freedom. Hearing a faint sound he spun around, coming face to face with what he believed to be a human being, who gestured to Walton to come towards him. The man gently but firmly led him through the space craft into a room which had a table and chair. What interested Walton the most was the presence of three other 'humans', two men and a woman.



"I thought I was rescued," he said, "and that's why I was cooperating. But the longer I talked and got no response, the more apprehensive I got that they weren't on my side. So I tried to get free, but there were three of them and they were stronger than I, and I just couldn't resist. They managed to get me down on the table, and they put a mask over my face. I struggled and I got my hand free and I almost pulled it off before I blacked out."

When Walton regained consciousness, he was lying on a stretch of road outside of Heber, Arizona. He thought he had been gone approximately 2 hours. He had, in fact, been missing for five days. It took a day for the news of Walton's return to reach Mike Rogers.

"It kind of pissed me off," he admits. "His family just didn't care I guess, they were so concerned about Travis they'd forgotten about other people, and they were deliberately trying to avoid Travis getting nabbed by the police. They didn't figure they would treat him fairly at all, and they didn't want him to be interrogated police-style in the condition they found him in when he was returned."

Rogers and the other loggers knew all too well the kind of police-style interrogation Walton would ultimately face. They had been subjected to police examinations, ridiculed by certain townspeople who found their story outrageous, and even faced rumors of murder. All six men agreed to a polygraph test, which took a full day to complete. Only one of these tests, from a logger who in the past had dabbled in illegal activities, was found to be inconclusive. The other five passed with flying colors.

"He was anti-authoritarian, an anti-establishment person," says Rogers, "so just to be in there taking a test in a jail environment a few feet away from bars, and a guy accusing him of murder, he couldn't handle it. He only took part of the test and got up and walked out. He actually passed the part that he did take, but polygraph procedures require them to only make a conclusion on the basis of a completed examination."

In 1993 this logger, along with Travis Walton and Mike



Travis is confronted by the aliens. Illustration by Mike Rogers.

Rogers, retook the polygraph test — they all passed... again.

Three days after Walton returned, Rogers was finally allowed to see him.

"I was able to talk with him about normal things, but as far as asking him about what happened to him, and I did ask him, he wouldn't even reply. He was really quite traumatized even three days later, and this was after the doctors had been with him and had him for quite some time."

In retrospect, Walton's perception of the aliens has changed. "I have to say that at the time I experienced it, it was ultimately terrifying, but in hindsight, after I got over the trauma and could reflect back on it, the fact that I was returned at all is quite significant. And the fact that I was returned whole and in one piece, except for the psychological effects, says quite a bit."

Walton is acutely aware that there will always be skeptics who will consider his experience a trumped up fantasy. But he has seemingly found peace of mind concerning the encounter.

"I have to look for the best that I can find in my experience, and I think it's given me an unique perspective, a way of looking at the world, an exposure to certain aspects of it that most people aren't privy to. It's astonishing that anyone could think that we're alone in this vast universe. To me that is the height of arrogance." ●

"THE FACT THAT I WAS RETURNED... IN ONE PIECE SAYS QUITE A BIT."

FIRE FICTION

***Fire in the Sky* is the movie based on Travis Walton's abduction. Judy Sloane talks to the stars DB Sweeney and Robert Patrick.**

ON THE evening of November 5th 1975, a group of loggers were on their way home after a hard day's work in an Arizona forest. They experienced an encounter so extraordinary that 20 years later Paramount Pictures told their story into a motion picture entitled *Fire in the Sky*. Riding in foreman Mike Rogers's truck, the six loggers spotted a UFO hovering in the nearby trees. Anxious to get a closer look at the craft, one of the men, Travis Walton, jumped out of the vehicle and approached the flying saucer.

Without any warning, he was thrust to the ground by a mysterious bolt of light which emanated from the space craft. The loggers fled the scene in sheer terror. When they

returned to the location minutes later, Walton was gone. For five days, the six men were under suspicion of murdering him — and then their disoriented and terrorized co-worker reappeared with recollections of being aboard the alien craft. This experience has become one of the most famous and credible occurrences in the study of extraterrestrial phenomenon.

The movie, which cast DB Sweeney as Travis Walton, Robert Patrick as Mike Rogers and James Garner as Lt Frank Watters, a veteran lawman who considers the whole incident a fabricated lie, began shooting in August, 1992. For Robert Patrick, fresh from his acclaimed performance as the new and deadlier robot in *Terminator 2*, *Fire in the Sky* was the opportunity he had been searching for.

"Whereas *T2* was Science Fiction, this is science fact. As an actor, I was looking for a normal human being being tested in an extraordinary situation."

Patrick also had an experience in common with Rogers that added to his enthusiasm in making the movie: when he was a child, he spotted a UFO.

"It's my only real experience with something which I didn't understand. We were living in Boston, it was the summer of '67 or '68 and I was in second or third grade. It was probably 7:30 or 8:00 at night, and I was with a group of kids and somebody said, 'Hey, what's that?' I've grown up near air forces bases and I've seen planes and I know what they look like, and this was not a plane. It made no noise, it was just a light. The feeling that I had was a fear so deep that it's in your stomach, it's as if you can't swallow or talk. I read the script of *Fire in the Sky* in Denver, and just reading it I



got that feeling again. I knew that I wanted to do this project."

DB Sweeney's reason for participating in the film had a great deal to do with the special effects involved.

"I wanted to work with Industrial Light and Magic, the guys who did the effects for some of my favorite movies. And I thought the story was a good vehicle for doing that kind of work."

Sweeney admits he had never heard of Walton's incident before receiving the screenplay, but decided not to converse with him about it until filming had already begun.

"I believed the script," he says, "and I believed the whole journey my character went through. I was afraid if I met Travis and for some reason did not believe it was a true story, I would then have conflicting emotions about playing the character and doing the movie. I thought I had more to lose than to gain by meeting him."

Sweeney's portrayal was thus taken from the screenplay and not the individual. This choice came from an experience that occurred three years earlier when the actor was shooting *Memphis Belle* in England — a movie which spotlighted a heroic group of men who flew many dangerous missions during World War II.

"The story was fictionalized in the sense that they jammed everything that ever happened on the *Memphis Belle* and its 25 missions into one, and then fictionalized it on top of that. It was not meant to be a literal representation of things that happened."

In their version, Sweeney's role was a coward. "I met Chuck Layton, who was the real navigator of the *Memphis Belle*, and he was the greatest guy I've ever met," admits the actor. "He had never had a crisis of confidence; in fact, everybody on the plane said, 'He saved our asses several times over.' Then I started thinking that everyone who is going to see this movie is not going to know that subtle historical difference — subtle in the sense of the story. But it was this guy's life, his epitaph. He can't be proud of being

This photo and below: the 'horrors' of alien abduction in the movie



on the *Memphis Belle* anymore. After that experience, I decided I didn't need all that complication, all that confusion. I liked the script for *Fire in the Sky*, I was happy with the way the character was written."

Unlike Sweeney, Robert Patrick was anxious to speak with Mike Rogers about the movie, and devoted many days to tracking him down, as the logger recalls.

"I spent hours camped in the woods a good part of the time on this planting contract, and the first time I talked with Patrick was at my dad's house. He'd actually gotten hold of me through relatives, during the process of which he learned that he was related to me! He's not a blood relative, but his wife is a second or third cousin."

Following their first conversation, the two men were in constant communication.

"Mike told me he had a hard time dealing with his emotions," says Patrick. "At one minute he was laughing and the next he was weeping. He said when the actual thing happened there were emotions zooming in and out of him as if the space craft was making him feel all these things. So

"I BELIEVED THE WHOLE JOURNEY MY CHARACTER WENT THROUGH"

"TRAVIS'S ABDUCTION SCENE WAS COMPLETELY MANUFACTURED..."

that was what I was trying to pattern it on, how he felt, and then my goal was to make it honest and true."

Rogers never visited the set, but Walton was a constant fixture and even appeared in the movie as one of the townspeople.

"There's a big scene where Mike confronts the town and lets them know what a bunch of hypocrites he thinks they are," says Patrick. "and Travis actually had a line. During the middle of the scene, he stands up and says, 'Yeah, Mike, where is Travis?' It was funny because I had to do that scene all day, over and over. There was one time he said his line and I just answered, 'Well, you're right there!' I lost it, I was cracking up. They took the line out, and you just see him sitting with his wife Dana. I'm sure he's sorry he missed that line!"

As with *Memphis Belle*, the producers of *Fire in the Sky* decided to 'fictionalize' Walton's experience on board the space craft, turning it into a scenario so foreign to what the logger reported that it bore no resemblance. In the film, Walton regains consciousness in a sea of goo

to face some of the most ugly and menacing aliens ever represented on screen. Sweeney shot these scenes for five weeks.

"It was a lot of time in the goo," he laughs. "It was very difficult technically to make the weightlessness seem so real. It was also a challenge to carry 10 minutes of screen time with no dialogue, just reacting to things, but I thought it was a positive challenge to do that — that's how movies started. When you have a good, compelling situation and great technicians helping to make it real, that's the best possible place to be as an actor."

Mike Rogers also found the scene challenging — but, for him, the challenge was watching it.

"Travis's abduction scene was completely manufactured," he says. "They changed the aliens from benign to evil. They changed a very tidy, clean-looking atmosphere in the ship to something gooey, sloppy, dirty — one review of the movie said it looked like the inside of somebody's colon! The real alien look is of extreme intelligence; they didn't look menacing. In the movie they had them naked, with this gnarled skin with bones sticking out of their necks — dirty, evil, nasty creatures.

"The only reason the real Travis was frightened was that he was dealing with the unknown, and he was in pain and was very uncertain. They didn't actually hurt him, and they certainly left no marks on his body. They didn't do the things that they did in the film at all, at least not while he was conscious."

Although Walton was disappointed that the film-makers decided not to represent his incident the way it truly happened, he did feel that they captured his emotions.

"There were things in the film that served to symbolize what I experienced. The scene in the craft where he's held down on the table by this membrane does bring back the kinds of emotions I was feeling. I was having trouble breathing, suffocating in this panic that I had been trapped. It must be very hard for people to understand what was

Sighting a Fire in the Sky...



going on inside me, but this membrane gives you those emotions visually."

Many other facts became fiction in the screenplay. The loggers in the film were late for their polygraph test, whereas they were actually an hour early. Travis is found at a gas station totally naked; in reality he had the same clothes on that he had when he was abducted. This meant that the most interesting fact was glossed over: his clothes did not have five days' worth of soil on them.

As filming continued, discussions amongst the cast arose about the incident. Robert Patrick: "We did talk about it. After we met these guys, we realized they did go through something very incredible. Jim Garner said, and this is an indirect quote, 'I have no reason *not* to believe these guys.' That was pretty much his take on it. I believe it just based on my conversations with Mike Rogers and Travis Walton. Something incredible happened to them, and if it's what they say it is, I have no reason not to believe them."

Paramount were aware of Rogers's feelings about the movie and insisted he sign a contract to the effect that he would not criticize the film before going on a worldwide tour to publicize it!

"The only good thing I was ever able to say about the film was that it was well made and very entertaining!"

Travis Walton has come to terms with the inaccuracies in the motion picture. "People don't understand why I can finally accept the fictions in the movie to the degree that I have. I can't completely, but once something is done, you only create problems for yourself if you agonize about it forever. It's not going to change anything."

Walton coped with the experience by writing a second book on the incident. It was released last spring, updating and retelling the experience the way it truly happened.

DB Sweeney admits he wouldn't mind encountering a UFO. "I suppose it would be encouraging to know that there is other life out there, and that it's benevolent, but I



James Garner as Frank Watters



Robert Patrick as Mike Rogers

don't know about flying saucers. In the Bible it says, 'God made man in his own image', and we have done the same thing to aliens. We always make them in our own image. Even if they look like lizards, they have two eyes and a nose and they fly around in something like an airplane. But it seems to me that the odds of them having those similarities to us are remote. They would evolve in their own terms. I would hope that I would be sophisticated enough to recognize an alien presence, and that they weren't in a bad mood!"

Neither Walton nor Rogers has seen a UFO since the incident in 1975. Travis admits he would never get out of the truck if he saw another one, but Mike isn't so sure what his reaction would be.

"I'd have to wait and see what I would do. I haven't had the opportunity yet. In a way, I kind-of hope for it because I want answers. I'm sick and tired of not knowing. In fact, my need to know has almost enveloped me. The questions pile up and up and there aren't any answers at all. I want some answers and I want them bad." ●

"SOMETHING INCREDIBLE HAPPENED. I HAVE NO REASON NOT TO BELIEVE."

CE3K TODAY

Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* remains a classic of its genre. James E Brooks reveals why.

NEARLY twenty years ago, five musical notes engraved themselves on the movie-going public's psyche almost as deeply as three words from a similar picture five years later ("ET phone home"). The theme of benevolent aliens coming down from the skies swept aside the cherished bug-eyed monster mentality reflected in nearly all Science Fiction movies up to that point and served also to infuse the new wave of SFX-laden features with a measure of soft-spirited humanism. **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** formed the foundation of Steven Spielberg's reputation for creating a world of innocence during an age of cynicism and had at least as much impact as **Star Wars** on other SF films of the period. In some ways, that influence continues today, but in others the trusting heart of **Close Encounters** has turned to something harder and darker.

The story begins with the sighting of several UFOs. Electrical utility worker Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss) encounters one while attending to problems resulting from a flurry of UFO activity.

Curiosity overcoming fear, he chases after the lights in the sky and meets Jillian Guiler (Melinda Dillon) and her son Barry, played by Cary Guffey. Both Roy and Jillian are obsessed with a mysterious mountain, an image placed in their minds that drives them to find its location and meaning.

This search helps heal the destruction in their personal lives that the arrival of the aliens has caused. Roy's family has become alienated by his escalating bizarre behavior, prompting his wife to leave, taking their children with her. Jillian's loss is even greater — her son was actually abducted. The film is thus a quest story, a journey of discovery that is most obvious in the search for the mountain.

Reaching 'Devil's Tower', he is reunited with Jillian, and the pair brave the land and the military to reach the point of contact. Here they witness the wonder of the aliens' arrival and the return of all those who have been taken over the years, including Barry. Jillian's world is thus restored, anchoring her once again to Earth, while Roy's path leads him into the alien ship and to the stars.

When **Close Encounters** was released in 1977, Science Fiction films had received very little attention on an adult level and even less respect. The last picture to break out of the genre 'ghetto' into mainstream popularity (and profit) was **2001: A Space Odyssey**. At the time **Close Encounters** went



ROY NEARY (Richard Dreyfuss)
Beginning an incredible journey

“CE3K FORMED THE FOUNDATION OF SPIELBERG’S REPUTATION FOR CREATING A WORLD OF INNOCENCE DURING AN AGE OF CYNICISM...”



into production, the incredible success of *Star Wars* had not yet occurred, and the only thing that enabled Spielberg to get the movie made was his own success with *Jaws*. Ironically, both pictures would pave the way for a renaissance in Science Fiction films. For the first time genre films would be profitable enough to attract major talent and budgets.

The perception of Spielberg's film, however, was fundamentally different from Lucas's. Though suffused with a child-like perspective, it was intended for a more sophisticated adult audience, whereas *Star Wars* eschewed thematic content for a broader appeal.

But the public reaction was immediate and surprising. Along with its fellow 'space' movie, the film racked up huge grosses. Even more unusually, the reviews were overwhelmingly positive, further elevating Spielberg's status from young auteur to modern visionary. *Close Encounters* was the picture that so well defined, in the press at least, Spielberg's vision of innocence no matter what the setting.

Nearly twenty years later, what lasting effect has *Close Encounters* had on genre, and mainstream, pictures? Undoubtedly, the hugest legacy the film offered was its unique perception of visitors from outer space. Historically, alien contact movies always reflected the type of paranoia so bound up in humankind's reaction to the unknown.

From respected works such as *The Thing* and *War of the Worlds* to B-pictures like *It!*, extraterrestrial visitation took the form of small or large scale invasion, usually resulting in widespread destruction before being repelled. Exceptions to the rule, while notable, are few and far between: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *This Island Earth* and even *Forbidden Planet* (though the aliens have been dead for millennia and their science serves as the instrument of destruction).

While the aliens of *Close Encounters* appear by turns mysterious and malevolent throughout the film, they are revealed as virtually divine by the time the main characters reach Devil's Tower. The recurring elements of bright, suffused light streaking through the night call to mind childhood images of heavenly visitation, one of many ways Spielberg bypasses the conscious, and cynical, adult mind to directly access ideas formed during childhood. The Mothership appearing at the end might even be said to be the ultimate nightlight — holding the dangerous darkness back, delivering reassurance and comfort. Spielberg would later take the same message of trust and cast it in a less ethereal form in his thematic sequel to *Close Encounters*, *ET*.

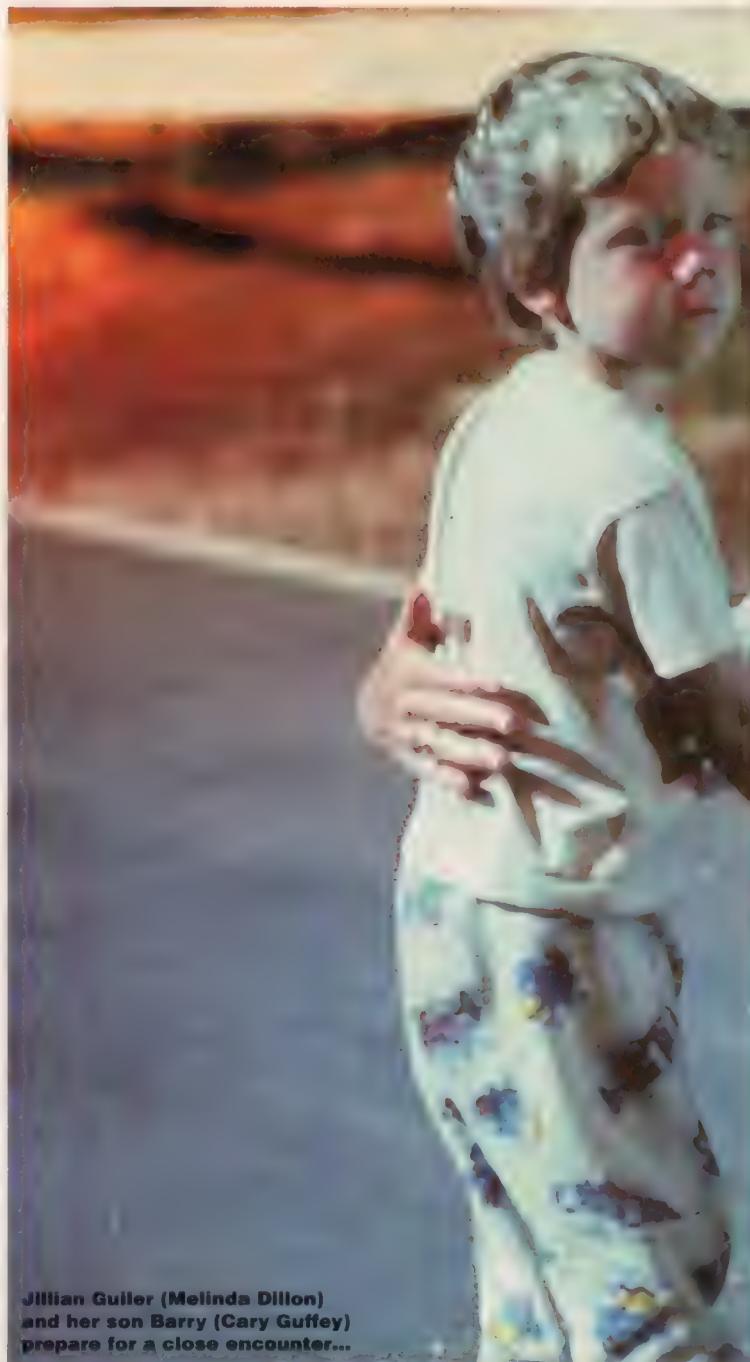
The perhaps unconscious desire to believe — maybe in a religious dimension, though outside a theological framework — coupled with scepticism is best summed up by star Richard Dreyfuss.

Even though he had never had a 'close encounter' of any kind, Dreyfuss said: "The idea of life in the universe and other parts of the solar system is something with which I agree. Part of me believes that other people have had the experience. At the same time, part of me says 'I

don't think this happened'. But I do think it's probable that contact will happen in our lifetime."

The American social climate in the late Seventies was essentially more optimistic and less shaded than the decade that followed. The war in Vietnam, an insidious cancer in the national character, had finally ended some years before. Richard Nixon's misuse of popular trust and government power had been revealed and swept away, replaced with a more accountable chief executive. Jimmy Carter, who had been in office less than a year when *Close Encounters* came out, had even made an official report of a UFO sighting. Thus the film is very much a creature of its time.

As the political and social climate and economic uncertainty fostered a move towards conservative values, the



Jillian Guiller (Melinda Dillon) and her son Barry (Cary Guffey) prepare for a close encounter...

backlash against the liberal swing was swift, radical and tenacious. Growing unemployment along with the rise of the 'yuppie' class created class schisms that seemed to sweep away the innocence and optimism that had been prevalent. In the age of Reagan, the view of alien life forms was best and most pithily reflected in John Carpenter's *They Live*.

Allegory gave way to large-spectacle features often drenched in violence. The Arnold Schwarzenegger brand of alien contact became the accepted norm with movies like *Predator* and *Lifeforce*, the furthest cry possible from the gentle extraterrestrials in *Close Encounters*. Visitors from the sky always came with malevolent intent, bent on the kind of destruction that harked back to earlier films like

Earth Versus the Flying Saucers. The only possible greeting from humanity was equal violence, driving the menace away and restoring Earth's safety and isolation.

In recent years, the trend has continued. One of the major box office hits of the summer, *Independence Day*, is a retelling of the invasion story. And one of today's most talked-about television shows is *The X-Files*. While the alien presence alluded to in a continuing arc of connected episodes is rarely overtly harmful, they hardly appear to be descendants of the messianic Klaatu from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Interestingly, Neary and *The X-Files*'s agent Mulder are both motivated by faith and a need to discover, but while Neary's quest is a bright one, Mulder's is motivated by a negative event.



Another result of this change in perspective is that in recent shows, notably *The X-Files*, human beings in positions of power become accomplices, complicit with whatever the aliens are planning. The new wrinkle is humans divided against each other; at least in the older invasion films, humanity presented a united front. Depending on your point of view, it hardly passes for progress.

In 1982, Spielberg took the opportunity afforded by the success of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and his other films to shoot new footage and re-edit the original release.

"Film-making should never be a dry-cement process," he said. "You can often have different ideas or feelings about a film months or years later and there are points that could be added to improve the story's impact. But it's not often that you get a chance to change the work to match your vision."

The original screenplay was nearly 160 pages long, but due to budgetary and production limitations, he was only able to shoot 135.

The main focus of the re-editing was the ending. Spielberg had been dissatisfied with breaking off the first film at the point where Neary disappears inside the Mothership. In the Special Edition, he follows Dreyfuss's character inside the alien vessel.

"The new footage takes Richard Dreyfuss one step further, but keeps the mystery still. I'm glad I was able to enhance the work to meet my original vision and I'm happy that a film company would agree to such an unorthodox plan."

Some elements benefit and others suffer. When the wave of big-budget Science Fiction pictures started in the late 70s and early 80s, a great deal of attention was focused on the special effects. Many movie-goers became rapt in the visuals, ignoring the importance of other elements essential to a movie's success — chief among them the script and characterization.

Even critics fell into the trap, perpetuating the myth that a Science Fiction film needn't rely on solid elements of drama, and that somehow the only necessary ingredient was impressive opticals.

Spielberg seemed to share this tunnel vision. Scenes which provided greater strength and continuity to Richard Dreyfuss's character were sacrificed to make room for special effects footage.

The most controversial addition — the footage inside the Mother Ship at the end of the movie — hardly advanced the story or satisfied the curiosity of those who had seen the original cut.

The end result was to take a movie that had possessed a certain charm in its original form and weaken it by removing parts of its 'skeleton' and softening others.

Regardless of the flaws, the essential core of *Close Encounters*'s message is what makes it memorable.

Melinda Dillon may have summed it up best when she said: "Does other life 'out there' exist? This is my answer: It doesn't matter. It's irrelevant to our lives at this point. The longing for more in life, however, is extremely relevant; the

need for a deeper experience is really important. The spiritual life has to start there, in that place of longing deep in one's psyche.

"The legitimate search is not for little guys with big heads, but for the meaning of life. The feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, incompleteness and everything that leads away from life is when a person is not awake to his inner life. And that's what I mean by deviation from the true faith. The inner life is real and, for the main part, the life we call real is illusion."

In that case, perhaps those who see *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* as a religious experience are not far wrong. And if that is so, its successors are sadly lacking in the Old Time Religion. ●

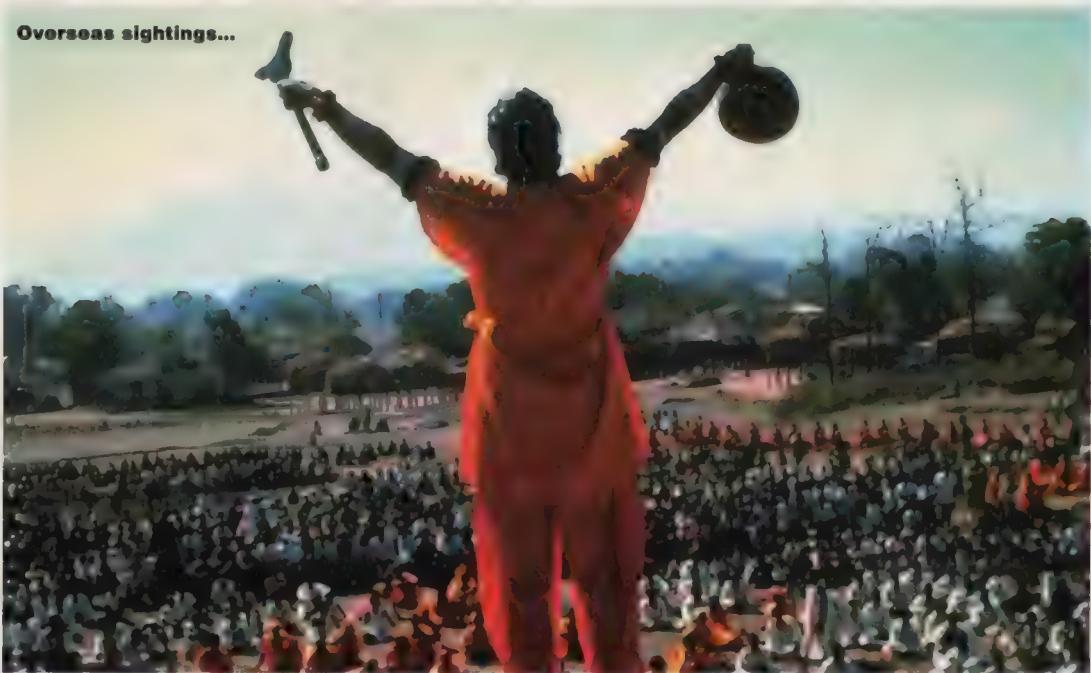


Jillian awaits her son's return



Fires in the sky...

“THE RESULT WAS TO TAKE A MOVIE THAT HAD POSSESSED A CERTAIN CHARM IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM AND WEAKEN IT BY REMOVING PARTS”



HAVE FAITH

Jim Brooks examines *Conduit*, an early *X-Files* story about believing the unbelievable.

IT BEGINS quietly at a campsite in the middle of the night. A clear night sky watches over Lake Okobogee, cold twinkling pinpricks set in a deep blue field. Nothing stirs, not even the brother and sister nestled in their sleeping bags on the ground beside the trailer where their mother slumbers. The stillness inside the camper is shattered by an intense light flooding in from outside and violent shaking that empties the cabinets of their contents and knocks the woman from her bed. When the disturbance ends, the little boy calls frantically for his mother, saying that the sister is gone. They look up to the sky and the mother calls the girl's name over and over.

But there is no answer...



appearance of Mulder's sister Samantha over twenty years before. Even with this significant seed of doubt, though, Scully begins to exhibit the depth of loyalty which will become a staple of the series. She successfully persuades Blevins to give the admittedly flimsy case a once-over.

But her doubts grow as Mulder seems to rely less on accepted investigatory techniques and more on intuition and faith.

The issue of faith is central to the episode; the need to believe in a secular society. Scully's skepticism acts to contrast that faith as well as create the dramatic tension that bolsters the series' suspension of disbelief. *Conduit* is thematically rich, working on several layers which neatly mesh to advance both the series and the two continuing characters. One of the writers expressed the opinion that the show — specifically the process of abduction — is symbolic of abuse.

Certainly, the removal of any free will, of a forfeiture of control. Additionally, the episode stands as

a metaphor for the disintegration of the family.

Mulder's initial research into the disappearance revealed that Ruby's mother, Darlene, was part of a group of Girl Scouts who witnessed a UFO years before. When Scully and Mulder arrive, Darlene finds a hot and cold reception. While Mulder is willing to believe, Scully gives the woman the kind of look that she's been getting ever since her UFO sighting as a girl. After the NSA raids her house, tosses it, and takes her and her son in for questioning, Darlene suffers her final betrayal. She refuses to cooperate with Mulder, cutting off his best chance — up to that point — to gain some knowledge as to Samantha's fate.

Carrie Snodgrass is instantly sympathetic as Darlene. Her portrayal of a woman saddled with a fate she never wanted is completely convincing. The weary sadness and ruin that permeates Darlene gives some idea as to the human toll a UFO experience can have on a human spirit. Years of being ridiculed and regarded as unbalanced have etched her with a world-weariness that greatly exceeds the mundane character of her life.





The type of disbelief Darlene has suffered is reflected in the murder subplot. Scully's and the local law enforcement's preferred avenue of investigation focuses on Ruby's boyfriend who is also missing. At first, the evidence suggests that he got Ruby pregnant, leading to the supposition that he might have killed her and then fled. Scully grasps at this theory, attempting to bring Mulder around to her way of thinking. Mulder is unshakably certain of the UFO angle, however, somewhat vindicated when it comes to light that one of Ruby's classmates killed the boy, with still no explanation for Ruby's disappearance. This small victory is little comfort for Mulder and Darlene.

Of course, Darlene isn't the only victim. The aching hunger Mulder feels for his sister's return, as well as the desperation it fills him with add a poignant dimension building on slivers of personal history presented in the pilot. Carrie Snodgrass's performance helps to heighten an equally brilliant performance from David Duchovny. As directed as he is, there are times when Mulder's vulnerability comes enough to the fore that he looks for all the world like a little lost boy. One can well imagine the same

troubled look on his face when he was a child as that on Darlene's son, Kevin.

Kevin is the lynch pin. Mulder himself refers to the little boy as the conduit for some kind of communication from those responsible for Ruby's abduc-

tion. The static-filled television screen reveals a continuous stream of 1's and 0's that decode into images and snippets of music likely culled from one of the Voyager probes. But it eventually communicates another message, one of far greater interest to all those involved in the case. The mosaic created from Kevin's transcriptions, which Scully and Mulder find on the floor of the Morris's living room creating a portrait of Ruby is sight enough to make the blood run cold. Even Scully is affected, feeling the touch of something that defies the well-reasoned pattern of empiricism.

Finally, the picture is also the clue that sends the two FBI agents back to where it all began, where it will all end.

Back in the forest, Scully and Mulder find Darlene's empty camper, leading them down to the lake. There, Darlene is down, but Mulder pushes ahead, driven by Kevin's voice.



Scully doesn't want to believe

The image that greets him is strongly reminiscent of something from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Kevin stands on a rise before the treeline, looking for something in the distance. As blood-colored light bleeds through the fingerlike forest, a low thrumming sound fills the air. For a few moments, Mulder is as transfixed as Kevin before the sound resolves itself into something more recognizable as terrestrial in nature. A motorcycle gang bursts over the rise and nearly runs them over. Overcome with disappointment, Mulder gives up right there, trying to convince Kevin that his sister isn't coming back. But the boy is adamant that she is somewhere around them. His faith is borne out a few minutes later when Scully calls to them.

Ruby reappears physically drawn, but testing reveals a more convincing sign of something unusual — her blood work shows changes consistent with a significant period of time spent in zero gravity. Even Scully concedes the lack of an immediate rationalization. Mulder begins talking to Ruby, excited by the prospect of finding out what occurred while she was gone, but is interrupted by Darlene. She forbids any kind of inquiry, explaining that she refuses



'A BLOOD-COLORED LIGHT FILLS THE FOREST, A LOW SOUND FILLS THE AIR.'

CREATING CONDUIT

CONDUIT was the first script for *The X-Files* by writing team Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, who were asked to join the staff by creator Chris Carter on the strength of an abortive pilot script they had written for ABC called *Country Estates*.

Gordon and Gansa's first story for *The X-Files* was scheduled fourth in the season, and Howard Gordon has admitted that they "struggled mightily" during the writing of it. After Carter himself had penned *The X-Files*'s opening two UFO-related instalments, fellow writing team Glen Morgan and James Wong had sent the series down a completely new avenue with their first script, *Squeeze*. Gordon and Gansa felt they lacked the confidence to emulate the risks taken so early on by Morgan and Wong and so, instead, *Conduit* harked back very much to the series' pilot, both episodes featuring the unseen presence of extraterrestrials, the disappearance of local teenagers, and lots of action set in very darkened woods.

The writers felt that now the series was up and running, the time was right to re-introduce the concept of its 'holy grail' as established in the pilot: Mulder's search for his younger sister, Samantha, who has vanished from their family home some 21 years earlier. The unexplained disappearance of teenager Ruby Morrissey, as well as having a dramatic thrust all of its own, was to serve as a parallel for Mulder's loss also. The scene that pointed to this most clearly — the closing one, where Mulder is left sitting alone in a church armed with just his faith and a photo of Samantha — was the one of which the writers were ultimately most proud.

Gordon and Gansa set out primarily to tell an abduction story, but one which they never planned to resolve; it was to be left completely to the individual viewer as to what fate they thought had befallen Ruby. The pair researched heavily into UFO lore, especially in terms of repeat abductions and mother/daughter abductions, but it was only under instructions from Fox

executives that Ruby was returned suffering from weightlessness — the one fact that Mulder is able to hold onto to prove his abduction theory. The writers originally had Ruby's fate left hanging, but the network demanded a greater sense of closure as they had with *Deep Throat* two episodes earlier, and as they would on several other occasions during the season.

An unwritten rule devised early on in the series was that each act of each episode should feature what the team termed an 'X-Files moment' where something

very strange or unnerving would occur. Chief amongst these in *Conduit* was the Alex Gansa-devised scene where Mulder and Scully look down from the second floor of Darlene Morrissey's house to see a picture of missing daughter Ruby formed from pages and pages of ones and zeros scrawled by little brother Kevin. The task of realizing this pivotal scene fell to the art department's Greg Loewen, who initially created a digital drawing on his computer. After completing half the image, it was decided that it all looked too precise to have been created by an eight year old, so graphic designer Vivian Nishi was brought in. Loewen's work up to that point was enlarged, printed onto a transparency and projected up onto the wall. Nishi then laboriously traced over the ones and zeroes to give the print out a hand-drawn look, a job that took several at-

tempts to get just right, over the course of several days and using much more than just several felt pens.

Very little else in the way of special effects was required for *Conduit*. FX make-up designed Toby Lindala had one of his earliest commissions for the series, creating the make-up for the deceased Greg Randall, after the crew had tried manufacturing a mummified face which Robert Goodwin later described as looking "like something out of Toys 'R' Us."

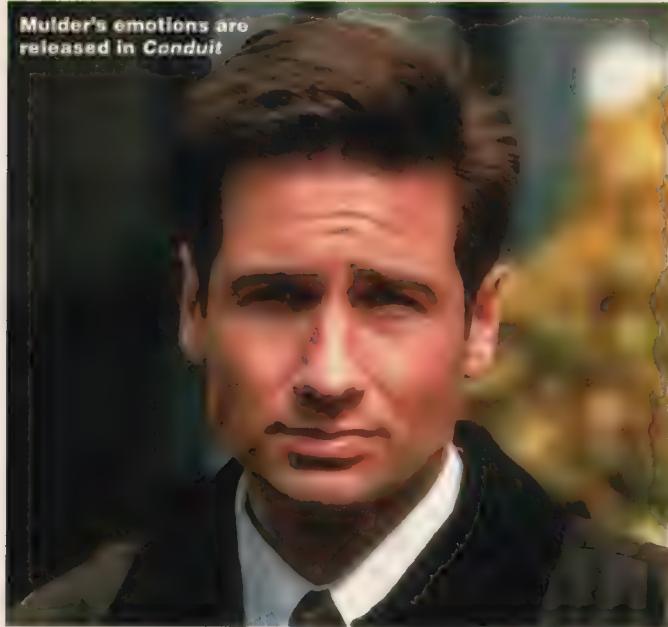
The episode was broadcast first in the US in October 1993, and its UK première followed some four months later.

Nigel Adams



Mulder and Scully at the site of the disappearance

Mulder's emotions are released in *Conduit*



to put her daughter through the same ridicule she suffered. The truth, she tells Mulder, has caused her nothing but pain

and she'll do anything she has to in order to protect Ruby.

Throughout the scene, Duchovny shows the effect of Mulder's hopes being dashed, as the golden ring is snatched away. It is a sliding, gradual process,

during which he seems to cave in on himself. At this stage in their relationship, there is very little Scully can do but stand by and watch her partner's pain. But Anderson manages to convey without words the great need Scully has to somehow reach out to Mulder even though she knows this isn't possible.

The last scene ties everything up and delivers the final emotion punch. We see and hear Scully play the tapes of Mulder's hypno-regression session in which he describes his sister's abduction. As Mulder's voice continues over the scene, we end with him sitting in a church crying over a picture of himself and Samantha as kids. The last thing we hear is Mulder saying that he wants to believe.

Writers Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa were the first to begin opening more of Mulder's past. Taking the first clues presented in the pilot, they reveal more of Mulder without falling into an exposition-heavy millstone. This is the first significant evidence that the show's production

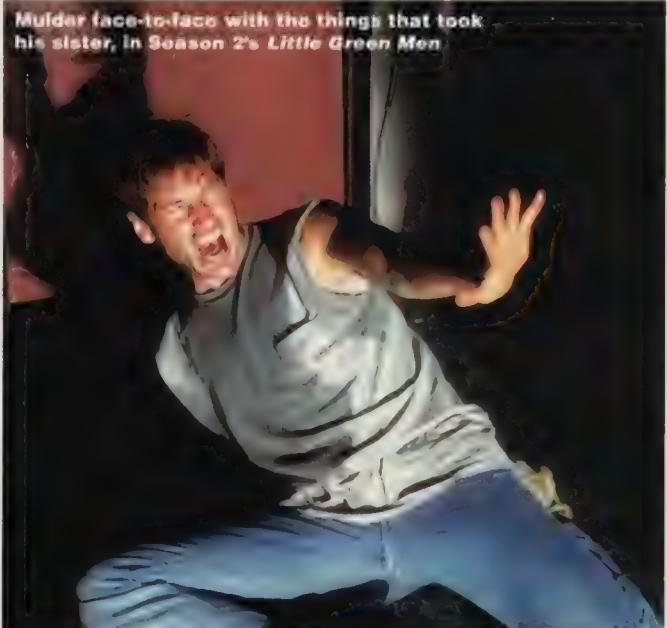
team and writers never lose sight of the old writing class adage: show, don't tell. One of the secrets to the success of *The X-Files* is its economy; just as the color palette stays unobtrusive and the performances are prevented

from going over the top, the scenes of personal revelation are kept in check, saying more with less. *Conduit* creates a more lasting impression by giving the bare spoken and emotional bones.

In contrast to the spare approach in writing and acting, the direction and visual content of the series show a more obvious flare. Even though Carter and company are firmly focused on the importance of the story, they realize that the nature of their subject matter is such that it lends itself to a very stylized treatment. The camera becomes a storytelling tool, reinforcing the mood of the piece, complemented by the lighting and cinematography. Several images from the episode jump out, but the two most striking are the 1/0 mosaic and Kevin standing silhouetted against the growing red light. Especially in the field, the camera helps bolster a dreamlike aspect that strengthens the expectation that something wondrous is about to happen. It's no coincidence that the best directors have producer's credits and that a number of the producers also direct.

Like Mulder, we want to believe. The powerful emotional pull that the producers and actors make on us is a sum of all the elements mentioned above. We feel Mulder's anguish, Darlene's mixture of fear and worry, all counterbalanced by the yardstick of reason that Scully represents. Chris Carter and the rest of his team make it very easy to accept a story of a little boy receiving signals from aliens light-years away through his television. In so doing, they create a conduit through which a very human *X-Files* story reaches the audience. ●

Mulder face-to-face with the things that took his sister, in Season 2's "Little Green Men"



DOCUMENTING THE WEIRD

Kevin Anderson, the writer of the *X-Files* and *Star Wars* books, reveals some paranormal secrets to James E Brooks...

LUKE SKYWALKER and Fox Mulder would seem to be separated by a gulf wider than any legend or X-File, but they do have one thing in common: both have had their adventures chronicled in print by best-selling writer Kevin J Anderson. *Ground Zero* and *Ruins*, the first two entries in a series of hard cover novels spun from *The X-Files*, are already *New York Times* bestsellers. And Anderson is not limited to novel-length fiction; he also has several *X-Files* comic books due out from Topps Comics.

Anderson always wanted to be a writer, but only recently has been able to support himself full-time from his writing. In the intervening years, he worked as a technical writer at one of the United States' leading nuclear weapons facilities — experience that would later prove invaluable.

Anderson wrote many original non-tie in novels — both by himself and with frequent collaborator Doug Beason — before his first foray into books derived from other media. Based on his past work, George Lucas chose



him to succeed popular author Timothy Zahn in chronicling further adventures in the *Star Wars* universe. The immediate result was the immensely popular *Jedi Academy* trilogy.

With so many major undertakings, how is Anderson able to keep things straight?

"I like changing channels, moving from one project to another," he tells *X-Posé*. "That's the way I keep my interest at such a high level for each book I'm working on."

Anderson was a casual viewer for most of *The X-Files*' first season before becoming hooked in the second year. The call from the publisher came during this time, asking if he'd be interested in writing novels based on the show. His answer was an immediate and enthusiastic 'yes.'

"Chris Carter had apparently read some of my *Star Wars* books and liked them," he says. "They wanted a high visibility hardcover to relaunch their line of novels because although they had done two paperbacks with Charles Grant, they had come out at the same time the series

"IN A BOOK YOU HAVE AN UNLIMITED BUDGET... WE TRY TO THINK BIG."



premiered, before the show was a hugely popular thing."

The opportunity presented challenges.

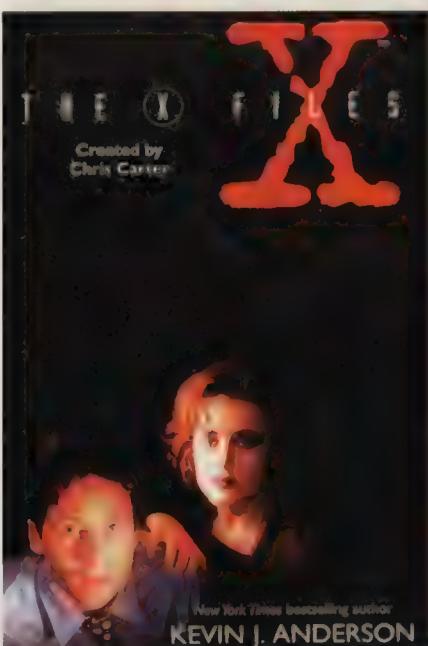
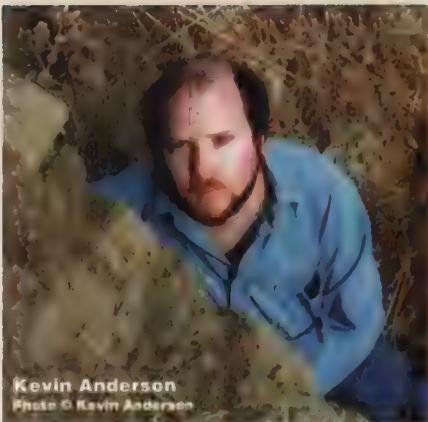
"They wanted to have somebody who was willing to work in a media universe and someone who was a bestselling author. And they wanted someone who could write the book from start to finish within two months. Fortunately, I'm a fast writer!"

Once he agreed to write the first book, Anderson picked subject matter close to home. **Ground Zero** finds Scully and Mulder investigating bizarre deaths associated with past and present nuclear weapons testing. The background against which it is set is complete and convincing — for good reason.

"The atomic bomb testing, the Manhattan Project and government research labs happen to be things I know a lot about because I worked in a lab for thirteen years," he reveals. "So I said to them, 'You want a high-tech, well-researched, very detailed and suspenseful SF thriller and you want me to write it in two months? With a deadline that tight, I'm going to have to write about something I'm familiar with, so how about we do a story where ghosts from atomic bomb testing are coming back to kill off nuclear weapons researchers?'"

Anderson 'pitched' this in a single paragraph memo to Chris Carter, producer of **The X-Files**, who loved it. A three-page proposal describing how the writer intended to put the story together followed.

"Chris liked that and sent it back with various comments in the margin — 'Make sure you do this and don't do that, and can you do it this different way?' I then developed a forty-two chapter outline with a detailed paragraph for each one, and that went back for comment. There were some very specific suggestions



— 'How about this one-liner where Scully says...', and 'When you do this part, remember that Mulder is probably going to be thinking of such-and-such episode.' It was character stuff like that.

"So Chris and his people were not just spectators with red pencils waiting to mark the things I'd done wrong; they were very much involved in developing the story itself. The feeling was that we were both trying to come up with the best **X-Files** story we could. They let me push the envelope as much as I can, but they also want to make sure there's an envelope there because they have their own boundaries and plans for what they are going to do. When they did say 'You can't do this', generally when something I wanted to do contradicted their plans for the show, they always worked to come up with an alternative way to do it."

The collaborative nature of the relationship spilled over to direct tie-ins with upcoming episodes. While Anderson was writing *Ruins*, Chris Carter, story editor Frank Spotnitz and Mary Astadourian tried to supply him with the evolving script for the episode they were working on, *Teso Dos Bichos*. Even though *Ruins* was set against a Mayan backdrop and the TV episode focused on the Aztecs, the common archeological theme was something that the **X-Files** people were eager to see referred to in the novel. Unfortunately, script rewrites and publication deadlines made inclusion of these elements in the book impossible.

The background of the main characters is an area many franchises guard jealously, but **The X-Files** producers have also proven the exception to this rule, allowing Anderson to add unique dimensions to the characters.

"In *Ground Zero*, I was able to establish part of Scully's background, the college life that you don't get to see in

"WE WERE TRYING TO COME UP WITH THE BEST X-FILES STORY WE COULD."

the series. And in *Ruins*, you get a bit more of what Mulder did right after his sister disappeared."

In all of his spin-off books, Anderson tries to take advantage of one area in which there are no constraints.

"In a book you have an unlimited budget, so we try very hard to make these novels more ambitious than you could afford to do in a forty-six minute television program. We try to think big; we don't want to do something off-the-cuff."

A frequent complaint regarding novels based on television or movie properties is that the author has failed to capture the spirit of the source material. Given the great differences between media, such a reaction is to be expected, but judging by the critical reaction and high sales figures of *Ground Zero* and *Ruins*, Kevin Anderson has obviously overcome these hurdles. Has he had any great problems keeping his novels true to the series?

"I didn't have any trouble with the constraints on length because *The X-Files* has done up to three episode stories successfully," he reasons. "The most apparent difference was that the TV series is such an atmospheric show. It depends so much on the weird background music, the strange camera angles, the lighting and all that sort of thing. I'm just writing words, so I don't have all of this stuff available to me. However, I can get inside the characters' heads. I can describe in excruciating detail how a rotting corpse smells or how the cold feels or the pain of a monster's claws around your throat. I don't have the resources a television show has, but I have a different set of assets — my author's toolkit, instead of a TV show toolkit. You play to the strengths of the medium you're working in."

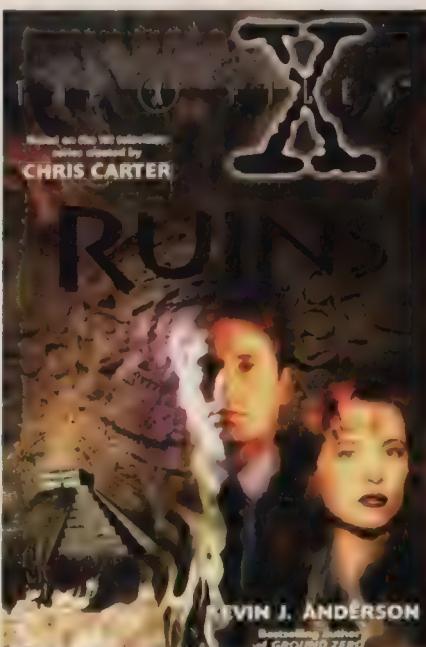
Anderson also believes strongly in delivering what's promised.

"You want to make sure that you give the reader *The X-Files* if they're buying an *X-Files* book. You want to make sure it captures the feel and flavour of the material you're working on."

How does he make the characters and setting consistent with the source?

"It's the same thing as if I were writing an historical novel set in ancient

Kevin Anderson
Photo © Kevin Anderson



Japan," he offers. "I'd research the country and era and I'd be constrained by what I uncovered. I treat it exactly the same way whether I'm doing *Star Wars* or *The X-Files*. Even though one milieu is based in reality and the other in fiction, the dynamic is the same. I don't waste a lot of time grousing and moaning, saying 'Oh, I want to have this character do this thing instead' — that's not what the character is. It's like writing a story that has Teddy Roosevelt ballet dancing — that's not what Teddy Roosevelt did."

Anderson has a unique perspective on what makes *The X-Files* popular.

"It's so well done," he insists. "I don't mean that to be flippant. Each episode looks like they've treated it as a major motion picture, not everybody walking onto a soundstage, saying their lines and going home. It's not like a lot of shows which seem to have a team of writers popping out scripts one after the other like they're disposable. I really feel that the people who make *The X-Files* are trying to stretch themselves and be ambitious, to make high quality stuff with a finesse and attention to detail that you hardly ever see on network television."

In addition to the upcoming graphical adventures of Agents Scully and Mulder, Anderson is planning his third *X-Files* novel, set to be released sometime in the spring of 1997. The gap between the second and third books is mostly because he is so busy with a wide range of projects. Next up are some more *Star Wars* books, as well as original work, solo and in collaboration with Beason and his own wife, Rebecca Moesta.

It's been a rewarding experience for Anderson beyond a literary one. While attending an *X-Files* convention, he has been able to speak with Doug Hutchison (Eugene Victor Tooms) and Dean Haglund of the Lone Gunmen. But his most interesting experience was signing books when Erika and Sabrina Krievins — the two young girls who played the clones in *Eve* — came up to the table for an autograph.

Just another page taken from the *X-Files*... •

ABDUCTIONS

Novelist Whitley Strieber (Christopher Walken)
continues a terrifying experience of alien
abduction in *Communication*



X-posé presents a special scrapbook of memorable images on the theme of alien abductions from television and the movies... Aliens have visited our world more than you might imagine...



WORLD'S END

Director Roland Emmerich has a massive hit on his hands with the blockbuster *Independence Day*. By Judy Sloane.

DIRECTOR Roland Emmerich's first step toward making movies in Hollywood began in his native Germany when he helmed the film *Moon 44*, and employed an English speaking cast which included Malcolm McDowell, Lisa Eichhorn and Dean Devlin. Dean Devlin? The young and still unknown actor, was to find success behind the cameras with Emmerich's company, Centropolis, producing and co-writing, with the director, 1994's box-office sensation *StarGate*.

And it was at the press junket for that Sci-Fi classic that the inspiration for this summer's mega-movie extravaganza, *Independence Day*, was ignited. While being questioned by a journalist, Emmerich admitted he didn't believe in space aliens. The reporter became indignant, wondering aloud how the director could make a film like *StarGate* without believing in the movie's basic premise. Emmerich replied, "I believe in fantasy," and went on to fantasize a great 'what if' plot which had enormous space craft hovering over every city in the world. When he bid the reporter adieu, he quickly made his way over to Devlin, saying, "I think I've got our next movie."

The two writers collaborated at an incredible pace — the only thing that moved faster than their writing abilities was the velocity with which their screenplay sold.

"We sent it to the studios. It took sixteen hours and we had a deal," recalls Emmerich. "It was on a Friday, and Monday I was hiring people left and right in Los Angeles. I'll never forget the first script session we had at 20th Century Fox. Their only comment was, 'Can you make it a little

bit shorter?' It was 138 pages long. I said, 'Why don't we shoot it and decide that later?' We ended up with a pretty long movie, but we only cut three or four transition scenes. It stayed pretty intact."

Set a couple of days before America's traditional celebration on July 4th, a frightening scenario unfolds as gigantic and mesmerizing space craft appear above major US cities and other world capitals. It doesn't take long for the Earth's inhabitants to comprehend the dire consequences of this invasion, as they now must come together to fight back, declaring a global Independence Day from the tyranny of alien aggression.

Emmerich admits that several Sci-Fi classics from the Fifties, including *War of the Worlds*, influenced him when writing the screenplay for the movie. The other genre he would base the picture on was less obvious — the disaster films which were so prevalent in the Seventies.

"I loved Irwin Allen's movies. I was talking with Dean Devlin about it. I said, 'Somebody should do *The Poseidon Adventure* again, or something like *The Towering Inferno*. Whenever we talked about it, we ended up saying, 'No, these natural disasters wouldn't work today. Who would care?' Then I had the idea of this alien invasion — that's a natural disaster. It combined pretty much the invasion genre with the disaster genre. We also had another kind of element in the movie which we thought was very interesting, the multi-character war drama where people come together to fight the enemy. It's very patriotic. And we realized, we could be patriotic because it's about aliens, it's politically cor-

rect, so we could create that feeling without insulting anybody. That was a real cool discovery."

In keeping with Irwin Allen's concept of disaster movies, Emmerich and Devlin insisted that humor be an integral part of the production.



"THE WHOLE CLICHÉ WAS THEY'RE FRIENDLY... THEY'LL TEACH US."

"We were very adamant about that," says the director. "I think it's the only way to do something like this because otherwise, it would be too dark, too depressing. I said, 'I'm not going to make a movie where everybody constantly looks scared. That's lame and unentertaining.'

"There's a certain period where you have to buy into it, where people scream and run, but there's also the moment where they have to go on with their lives. Don't forget our whole

thinking is, when they come, they will be friendly. The whole cliché, created single-handedly by Steven Spielberg in the late Seventies and early Eighties, was they're friendly, they'll teach us, they've come to visit us. I don't see any reason why, because if they have been visiting us for the last 30 years they haven't taught us much. They've abducted enough people to figure us out."

Emmerich's concept of the movie is capsulized in the scene where Will

Smith, an air force pilot, is fighting the aliens along with his company, and he's the only one to escape.

"He out-flies the alien in the Grand Canyon, and when he opens the hatch of the space ship, he punches the alien in the face and knocks him out. That's the kind of movie I was seeing. I was not seeing *Fail Safe*. I was seeing something more tongue in cheek. So we came up with a lot of comic relief characters which, for me, was very important. That's why we



"THEY DON'T HAVE ANOTHER AGENDA THAN ERASING US AND TAKING OVER!"

like to also call it a 'popcorn' movie. We wanted to give people an exciting and fun ride."

In keeping with Irwin Allen's notion, **Independence Day** spotlights many individual stories and characters who are united when the alien craft begin destroying Earth. But unlike Allen's movies, there are no superstars such as Steve McQueen, Paul Newman or Gene Hackman gracing the launch pads, as Emmerich felt the suspense throughout the film would be better served with "simply good actors. In the structure of our movie if you have Bruce Willis or Sylvester Stallone, who survives? When you have a movie with a big action star, you know his or her character will triumph. In our movie, everybody's fate is up in the air. Audiences will definitely be surprised as to who survives, and who doesn't."

"I believe that two or three of my actors will become so-called superstars, but that's not the reason I cast them. I loved Will Smith in **Six Degrees of Separation**. I thought it was one of the best acting jobs by a young male in the last couple of years. We wrote the part of David for Jeff Goldblum because I always said he was the only person on Earth who can explain something and make it entertaining."

Martin Landau was the director's first choice for the role of Goldblum's father in the film, but he was still shooting **Pinocchio** therefore Judd Hirsch, sporting enough make-up to look 60 years old, came aboard. For the President of the United States, Emmerich wrote a role which exuded heroic leadership.

"Every movie I saw, the President was a crook," laughs the director. "It was such a cliché. I always felt Bill Pullman should play the role. He's a real nice guy, and he transformed that on screen."

For the aliens, Emmerich wanted to create something that would be familiar to the public, but would also shock them. Therefore, he came up with a

biomechanical suit that the aliens wear, giving them two looks... both grotesque.

"We wanted to tap into existing mythology and, on the other hand, be different enough not to disappoint people. The overall idea for their culture was always like locusts, because they were more like a national disaster than bad guys. They don't have another agenda than erasing us and taking over the planet!"

When it came to designing the special effects, Emmerich refused to allow any of the visual effects houses to become involved.

"I don't believe that I can farm out such an important part of my film to other people, which are like a corporation in themselves and have their own interests. There's only one interest, and that's the movie. I sometimes hire people away from effect houses. There's a lot of free floating talent out there. One of our visual effects supervisors brought twelve people from Germany who were exceptional computer artists. I think, in the end, there were 400 effects people and we formed our own company."

"Daily I was involved, so daily, when something went wrong, I saw that too. Because sometimes there's something going wrong in an effects shot and you still see something in it that's interesting, and say, 'You know what, the shot overall doesn't work but that element works. Why don't we use that element in *that* shot and make that shot better?' Everyone of these shots is my movie, so I'm very concerned about it. And, yes, there was a lot of money spent on that part of the movie, but not that much. It's a little less than a quarter of the budget."

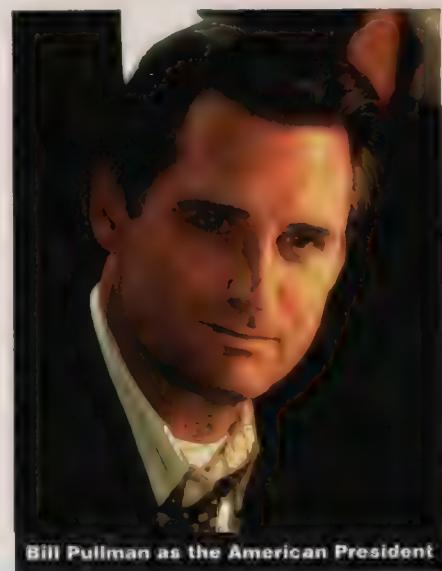
For Emmerich, the hardest scenes to stage were the ariel battles. As he recalls, "They were very complicated. We did computer simulations, little video games figuring them out, and we saw them and I said, 'No that's not exciting enough.' I constantly revised the scene [between Will Smith and the al-

ien] in the Grand Canyon. I always saw a version and thought, 'That's not exciting enough.' Everybody would come to me and say, 'Roland, what else can they do in a plane in the Grand Canyon?' But I always saw this wild ride. I thought of it as an expression of Will's character, as wild as it can get. That was pretty complicated because it was in broad daylight. Effects shots don't like broad daylight. Everything at night is much easier."

In a movie laden with hi-tech com-



Will Smith as a crack fighter pilot ready to take on the alien menace...



Bill Pullman as the American President

puter effects, one of the most impressive stunts staged by Emmerich entailed 18 rigged detonations.

"When you want to explode something, a computer can't do that. There's too much random detail. Don't forget computers are instruments, and a person has to tell a computer what to do. There's nobody in the world who could paint an explosion, so we relied on the old pyrotechnics."

With the aliens strafing an encampment of people on their way to the safety of the local air force base, 25 stunt men and women dodged and ran as jeeps and trailers erupted around them, with 470 extras dashing from their mobile homes towards the camera.

As summer drew near, the studio became worried and approached Emmerich, as he recalls with a laugh,

"Fox said, 'Do you want to rename the movie, put it on another holiday? Can you make it by the 4th of July?' Because, if we kept calling it *Independence Day*, we had to release it on the 4th of July as a marketing ploy. I said, 'Yes, we can do it.' I, at that moment, was overly optimistic.

"We got quite pressured in the end. The last two or three months were murderous. We did the visual effects day and night. We had 360 digital effects shots, and a lot of them were rendering two or three days. There was only so much you could do in a certain amount of time. It was a logistic nightmare."

With the movie being publicized and promoted as more of an event than a summer release, with predictions of \$100 million being accrued within days of its première, Emmerich

is definitely feeling the heat.

"Sure, I feel pressure, every filmmaker feels pressure, but it's created by the media not by the industry, because they are much more aware that every movie is hit or miss. The media loves competition, the fact that there is a race out there.

"I remember the days when nobody cared what was number one or two. Now they report national box office receipts on normal shows. But you have to deal with it. I don't lose sleep over it. I sometimes feel the pressure, and sometimes I can block it out. I don't think the quality of a movie is reflected in the box office. For me it's about always trying to make a good film. Down the line, in 20 years, nobody will care about the box office, they only will care about the movie." •

Producer and co-writer Dean Devlin with director, co-writer and executive producer Roland Emmerich



Emmerich on location

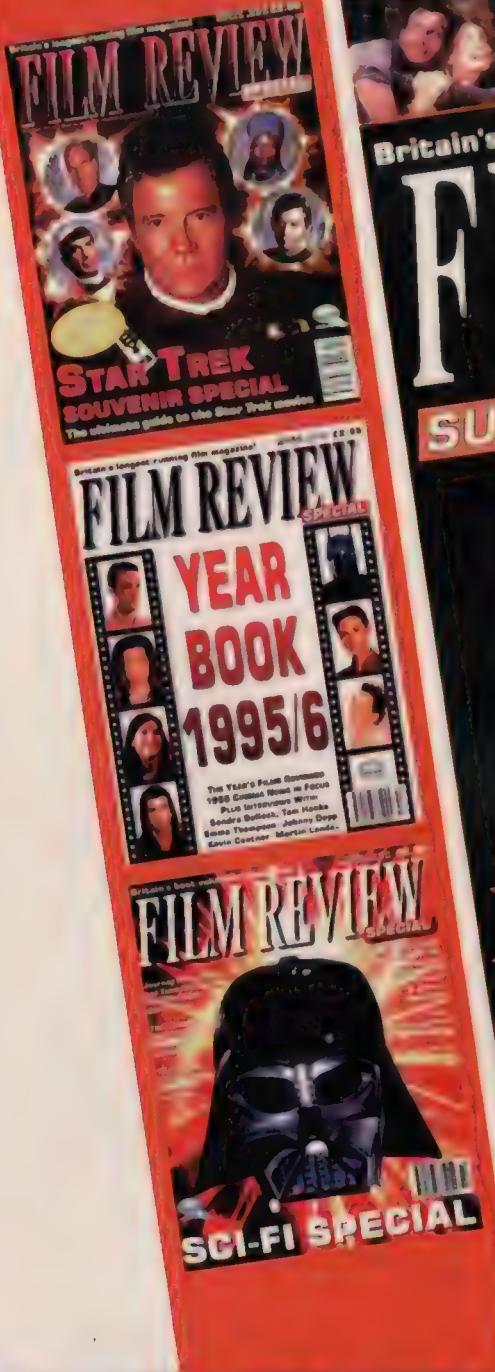


The alien ship over New York



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INDEPENDENCE DAY

US: July 2 1996

UK: August 9 1996

Directed by: Roland Emmerich

Stars: Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman, Robert Duvall, Randy Quaid

Rated: PG-13

Perhaps the most overly hyped, and eagerly awaited movie of this summer *Independence Day* unfortunately doesn't pull off the miracle of living up to its publicity.

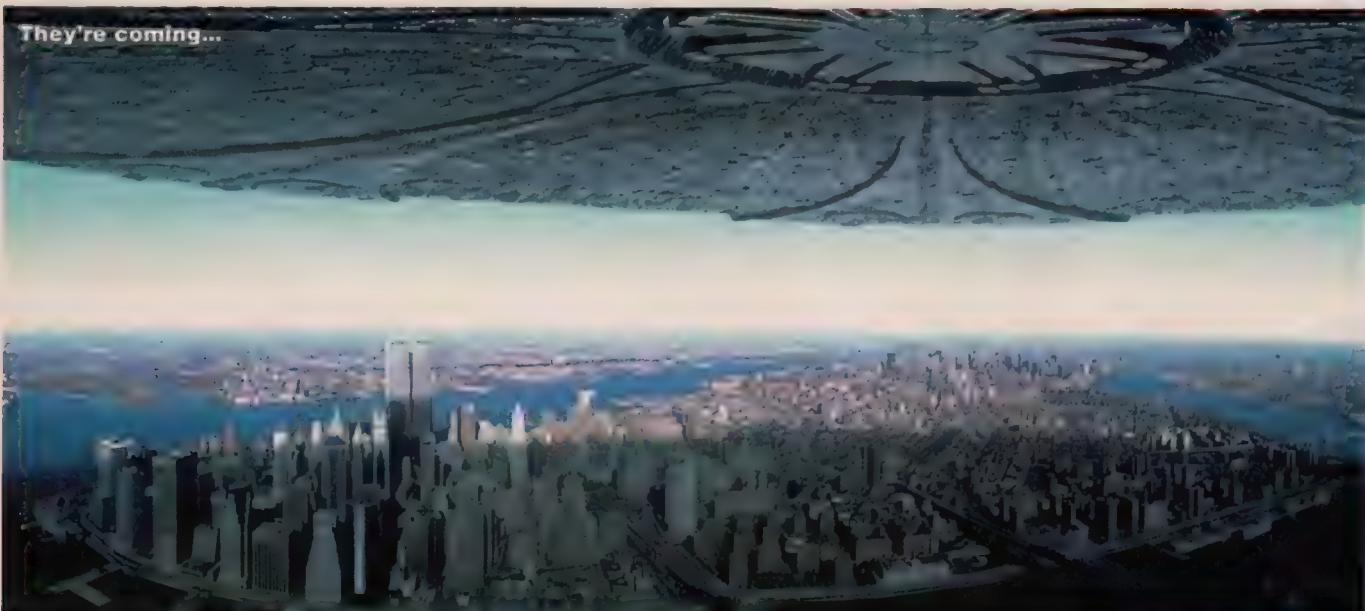
Literally exploding onto the screen as a cross between *War of the Worlds* and *Aliens*, and sporting enough spectacular visual effects to satisfy any moviegoer that they've received their money's worth, the film will undoubtedly hit the \$100 million mark before the last firework of the holiday is set off. But the odd dichotomy is, although the special effects and hi-tech computer graphics are all first-rate, the movie has a strangely old-fashioned format reminiscent of the disaster films of the Seventies, where several vignettes spotlight a selection of stories all culminating for the finale — in fact, I was convinced Charlton Heston was going to make a guest appearance to save the day.

With a plot that has holes large enough for the mother ship from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* to fly through, and a myriad of 'colorful', larger than life, characters who detract from the tension instead of adding to it, the movie unfolds the frightening scenario of an Earth under fire from an alien force of incomprehensible destruction.

Perhaps the overwhelming intensity of such a disastrous tale inspired writer/director, Roland Emmerich, to come up with comedy moments of relief, but these just defuse the holocaust by not taking it seriously. Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum have the right balance of heroics coupled with a sense of wryness, but Randy Quaid, Judd Hirsch and Harvey Fierstein give stereotypical performances which do nothing to enhance the movie's credibility.

Having said all this, *Independence Day* won't disappoint moviegoers who simply desire an epic Sci-Fi experience. It is definitely the ultimate E-ride. So, sit back, be sure your safety belt is fastened tightly, forget the dialogue, imagine that the unconvincing characters are real and just enjoy the trip.

Judy Sloane



PHENOMENON

US: July 3 1996
UK: August 30 1996
Directed by: Jon Turteltaub
Stars: John Travolta, Kyra Sedgwick, Forest Whitaker, Robert Duvall
Rated: PG



The fascinating premise of **Phenomenon** examines what happens to a simple everyday man who suddenly and inexplicably becomes a genius. George Malley, exquisitely portrayed by John Travolta, lives in a small town, making his living as a car mechanic. On his 37th birthday, he is hit by a blinding beam of light which he believes emanates from the sky. Suddenly, he has an insatiable appetite for learning, consuming four books a day, speaking foreign languages simply by glancing over the words, moving objects through the energy of his mind, playing chess and predicting earthquakes. At first, the thrill of his expanded intellect consumes him, but he soon makes the discovery that his friends are uncomfortable around him as his new powers and increased knowledge scares them.

This interesting scenario could have developed in many directions. Unfortunately, the path writer Gerald DiPego chose to go down reduces the movie into a maudlin soap opera that could be seen on any TV Movie of the Week. The end didn't justify the creative means. And it certainly doesn't do justice to an exceptional cast of performers who portray their characters with warmth, sincerity, humor and love. Particularly outstanding are Robert Duvall as Malley's doctor, who is more like a father to him, and Kyra Sedgwick as Lace, the wary mother of two whom Malley would like to date. Travolta is the only phenomenon in this emotionally unsatisfying picture. His performance of an ordinary, giving, loving individual will warm your heart.

Judy Sloane

ARRIVAL

US: May 31 1996
UK: TBC
Director: David Twohy
Stars: Charlie Sheen, Ron Silver, Lindsay Crouse
Rated: PG-13



Arrival would very much like to be a movie with a sobering message of how we Earthlings are mistreating our planet, but it misses the mark and unfortunately comes off on the hokey side.

Giving a performance which rings with the singular note of obsession, Charlie Sheen portrays radio astronomer Zane Ziminski, a man who spends his nights in a monitoring station listening for extraterrestrial signals. One night he and his friend and co-worker Calvin (Richard Schiff) record wild signals with their equipment and take them to their boss (Ron Silver) at NASA, sure that they will get the support needed for further investigation. Ziminski is instead fired, and Calvin is done away with. But Zane won't be stopped, and a satellite system he manages to construct in his neighborhood leads him to the Mexican interior, a hidden alien headquarters, and villagers whose legs bend backwards at the knees and who can leap above roof tops in a single bound!

The direction tends to meander in David Twohy's début. As an example, Ziminski's bravado as he makes his way through the alien hideout is totally out of place. The computer-generated aliens, however, are another example of how much new technology has brought to special effects, and are definitely worth seeing. This film needed to be a closer-knit production to succeed; instead, what should have been very exciting got lost somewhere in the jungles of Mexico, and what started out as promising summer excitement became a B-Movie disappointment.

Dian Spence

THE CRAFT

US: May 3 1996
UK: TBC
Director: Andrew Fleming
Stars: Robin Tunney, Fairuza Balk, Neve Campbell, Rachel True
Rated: R



The Craft, a well-made supernatural thriller, is the stuff of which nightmares are made. Directed and co-written by Andrew Fleming, the movie is taut, well-paced and has more than its share of startling special effects.

This is the story of three high school girls, each a social outcast, each blighted in some fashion. There is Bonnie (Neve Campbell), who has a skin disfigurement; Rochelle (Rachel True), a black girl who feels the sting of discrimination, and Nancy (Fairuza Balk), the leader of the group, who has a very questionable reputation. The girls are dabbling in witchcraft, but feel they need a fourth member in order to successfully cast spells. After seeing a new girl, Sarah (Robin Tunney), miraculously balance a pencil on her desk, the three 'witches' believe she may possess the innate powers they seek.

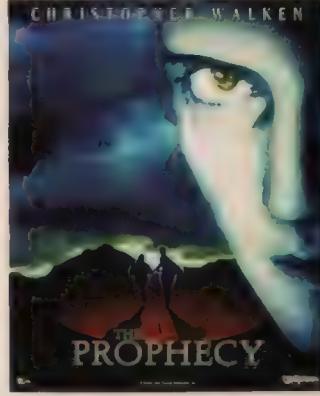
The combination of a troubled personal life and an unfortunate incident with a cruel football star makes Sarah ready to accept the friendship of the 'unholy three', and they take revenge on those who have hurt them. Paying no heed to the local occult shopkeeper's warnings they forge ahead, and this is when the fun really begins — wind, lightning, spells, snakes, hallucinations and death. It becomes a case of good vs evil, with special effects from Sony Imageworks that are just creepy enough to create the right mood and settings without blowing the audience away.

Even though the movie is rated R, it is sure to appeal to the younger set. With the message 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you', this can't be a bad thing.

Dian Spence

THE PROPHECY

ON VIDEO US: March 12 1996
ON VIDEO UK: January 30 1996
Directed: Gregory Widen
Stars: Christopher Walken, Eric Stoltz, Virginia Madsen, Elias Koteas
Rated: R



When a mysterious corpse is found with an arcane bible containing an unseen chapter of *Revelations*, Thomas Daggett (Elias Koteas), a wannabe priest turned cop, heads up an investigation of the crime, his soul and the power of belief. Before long, he is surrounded by a swirl of hokey special effects and caught up in an uncivil war between angels.

The always-spooky Christopher Walken (Gabriel) and Eric Stoltz (Simon) are so jealous of the "talking monkeys" God created that they have wrought death and destruction through war on Earth since the beginning of human time.

Gabriel is in search of one truly evil soul to play on his team and finds it in the person of Amanda Plummer (Rachael), who somnambulates through her role with the strains of *Sleepwalk* playing in the background. The unique chemistry shared by the three actors tempts one to think of *Pulp Fiction* with angels, but it's all pretty silly.

The ham-handed moralizing that reduces all the ills of the world to petty jealousy between a couple of pretty boy angels — who make Lucifer look like Goody-Two-Shoes — occasionally gives way to a bit of gallows humor. "Come work for me," rasps Gabriel, extolling angelic fringe benefits. "No one tells you when to go to bed, you get to eat all the ice cream you want, and you get to kill people night and day!"

Of course, it's all just fantasy. A real angel would have killed this film.

Rachel Donahue

POWDER

ON VIDEO US: May 14 1996
THEATRICALLY UK: October 25 1996
Director: Victor Salva
Stars: Mary Steenburgen, Sean
Patrick Flanery, Jeff Goldblum.
Rated: PG-13



Upon the death of Jeremy Reed's grandparents, the authorities discover they've been keeping something weird in the basement — Jeremy. Looking like Edgar Winter without hair, the teenager is as innocent as *Forrest Gump* and, it turns out, as potentially lethal as *Carrie*.

By rock and roll standards, the lad doesn't look too strange. With his red lips, tiny sunglasses and snap brim hat, he resembles a translucent Michael Jackson in a Boy George disguise. But this is the Midwest, and Jeremy sticks out like a pig with a sidesaddle, especially when the local social worker and do-gooder (Mary Steenburgen) plops him down in what appears to be the State Home for Bullies. Cornered in the cafeteria by a legion of louts who dub him 'Powder', things look bad for Jeremy — until he retaliates with an impressive display of flying flatware.

Jeff Goldblum is in his element as a physics teacher who loves his work. When Jeremy gets zapped by runaway electricity from a Jacob's ladder during a class demonstration, the man becomes determined to unravel the mystery of this gentle boy with strange powers and an IQ that's off the chart.

Combining a lot of Einsteinian theory, a little romance and a few lessons in human nature, *Powder* underscores themes of compassion and understanding that have been explored more eloquently in films like *Phantom of the Opera* and *Mask*. Still, it's a story that will appeal to younger viewers, despite a soundtrack so syrupy you could pour it over a waffle.

Rachel Donahue

THE X-FILES: GROUND ZERO

Written by Kevin J. Anderson
Harper-Prism; hc; 290 pgs



Mulder and Scully are sent to investigate the mysterious death of the head of a top-secret nuclear weapons project, apparently incinerated by a localized nuclear blast which left everything else in the building untouched. As the agents nose around, other people connected with a large bomb test on an idyllic island 40 years previously also begin turning up dead. Scully believes that anti-nuclear terrorists are somehow responsible, but Mulder, of course, opts for another theory — one that involves revenge from beyond the grave...

Ground Zero should prove an enjoyable read to most fans of *The X-Files*. Anderson has managed, for the most part, to capture the relationship between Scully and Mulder well. There are points, however, particularly after the first third of the book, where they relate to each other with a familiarity that seems to spill over the well-defined limits we've seen in the television episodes. The major fault with the novel lies in the author making what Mulder calls 'extreme possibility' a minor factor in the story. *Ground Zero* is a generic thriller, containing little that makes it fall into the unique *X-Files* category. The supernatural element unfolds too slowly and too slightly, so that it eventually seems almost like an afterthought rather than the prime mover.

In spite of these flaws, *Ground Zero* is highly superior to the majority of media-based novels. Kevin Anderson has obviously researched the characters and the show and succeeds in producing a book which is an extension of the familiar television series.

John Bachen

THE X-FILES: RIUNES

Written by Kevin J. Anderson
Harper-Prism; hc; 290 pgs



When a US archeological team is lost in the Mexican jungle under mysterious circumstances, Mulder and Scully are sent to find them.

As expected, Mulder has an ulterior motive closely connected with his search for evidence of extraterrestrial life on Earth, a search that ultimately bears fruit...

Set against the rich physical and political background of the Mexican interior, Kevin Anderson's follow-up to *Ground Zero* is even better than its predecessor.

The tone follows more closely that of the series itself, aided by the thickly atmospheric jungle and a more complex and insidious multi-pronged conspiracy.

In a plot that could almost be 'Erich von Daniken meets the FBI', ancient astronauts are a natural for agents Scully and Mulder.

Availing himself of the wide canvas precluded by television budgets, Anderson throws the two agents into a setting of ancient and present-day danger, both from the human race and beyond.

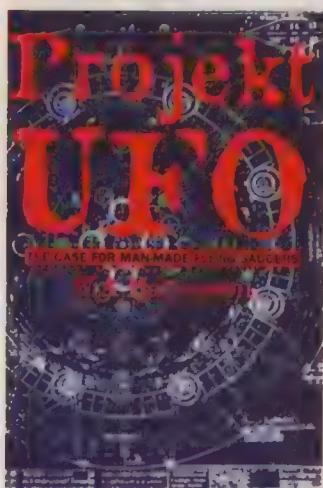
The *X-Files* story element is nicely balanced with those of a more realistic nature, creating a climax that is both satisfying and logical.

Readers who enjoyed *Ground Zero* will find *Ruins* a better book, which raises high expectations for Kevin Anderson's third *X-Files* novel, which is due to hit the bookshelves sometime during the course of next year.

John Bachen

PROJEKT UFO

Written by W A Harbison
Boxtree; pc; 275 pgs



Flying saucers are not extraterrestrial spacecraft but extraordinarily advanced man-made machines. So claims W A (Allen) Harbison in *Projekt UFO — The Case for Man-Made Flying Saucers*. The book is meticulously researched, carefully argued and for the most part dull as ditchwater. One suspects that Harbison could have made his case in about half the pages but had to pad the book out to meet publishers' requirements.

Harbison claims he has hard evidence that Nazi Germany 'initiated a research programme, "Projekt Saucer", for the development of saucer-shaped aircraft'. The Nazis built massive complexes under the ice in Antarctica throughout the war, and in 1945, selected scientists escaped to this South Pole base to complete the programme. Their success might explain why, even during the frostiest part of the cold war, the super powers always co-operated on the Antarctic.

In short, Harbison argues a massive international conspiracy theory. The research and development of man-made flying saucers is proven and the technology to build and power them probably exists; we just don't know about it. What is never properly explained is why anyone would want to build flying saucers in the first place. And in the age of spy satellites, could all this really have been kept secret? Harbison obviously knows his stuff but you suspect that he could present a fairly plausible case to show that the moon is made of cream cheese. The question remains: Is he trying to wind up the pro-UFO lobby, or is he just taking the mickey?

Brett Hindson

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GOTHIC AMERICAN

American Gothic delves into the darker side of the Deep South. Judy Sloane talks to its creator, Shaun Cassidy.

TWO DECADES ago, when Shaun Cassidy was starring in the television series *The Hardy Boys* at Universal Studios, he dreamed of the day he would have his own office on the lot where he could produce and write a myriad of projects. Quite an aspiration for a 19-year-old who had just become the teenybopper flavour-of-the-year.

"I spent more time up in the producer's office than on the set of my own show," he recalls. "I was much more interested in hearing conversations between the writers and the networks. I was trying to write scripts for *The Hardy Boys*, but they wouldn't take me seriously."

Sitting in his spacious modestly-decorated suite, it's more than obvious Universal is taking him very seriously now. But his adolescent vision-for-the-future took longer than even he imagined, although his celebrity status, he admits, did assist him in opening doors. But it wasn't until 1989 that Cassidy got his foot firmly in the door at Universal when he pitched them the concept for a series called *Over My Dead Body*.

"They gave me an hour script commitment because they didn't know what to do with me!" he laughs. "And

I think to get rid of me they said, 'We'll just give him an hour episode commitment and he'll write something, and we'll have our staff rewrite it, and we'll be done with him.' But they actually ended up liking the script a lot, and it gave me all kinds of new openings."

Cassidy went on to write a couple of television movies, one of which, *Strays*, was in the Horror genre, pitting cats against man in the way Hitchcock did with his feathered predators in *The Birds*. This screenplay led to the most off-beat program to be seen on American television since *Twin Peaks*. Universal coupled Cassidy with Sam Raimi, the director of *The Evil Dead*, to conjure up a dark and foreboding Horror series for CBS.

"They said, 'Come up with something scary' — that was my only note," says Cassidy. He did — and called it *American Gothic*.

"I'd always been fascinated by southern Gothic literature like Tennessee Williams and Faulkner, and the idea of there being bodies buried in this pristine, beautiful, facade which the south is so good at projecting. I thought why not do the underbelly of a small town and use it as a forum in which to explore good and evil."

The evil is personified by the character of Sheriff Lucas Buck, played





Shaun Cassidy on set for
American Gothic

with intense depravity by Gary Cole of *Midnight Caller* fame. Although written as an ensemble piece, the character of Lucas Buck garnered the kind of attention that JR Ewing did when *Dallas* premiered. It's a role most actors would give their eye-teeth for, but Cassidy insists that he didn't write it with himself in mind.

"I actually never even thought about it, only because I didn't want to act anything because I was writing. But you do play all the parts when you're writing them, and they're all different aspects of your personality."

As a producer on the show, Cassidy was privy to all aspects of the creative process, including the casting of his characters. For Lucas Buck, "the antagonist" around which the story flows, there seemed to be only one actor who filled the part.

"Gary Cole is a great man and a terrific actor," say Cassidy. "He had the perfect balance between charm and malevolence which is needed in the character. He's a very masculine actor, sort of a guy's guy and yet different than anybody's idea of a Southern sheriff."

As the pilot began filming in Wilmington, North Carolina, Cassidy faced a new, and amusing, dilemma. In his many years of acting on television he would find himself constantly wanting to compose new dialogue for himself. Now he had actors confronting him with the same plight.

"It's God's little joke on me, isn't it?" he laughs. "The complete revenge for anything I may have done to other writers. I used to rewrite my dialogue quite a lot, to the writer's chagrin. I've had actor's call me and say, 'What about this line?' Most of the time they are pretty respectful, and obviously, being an actor, I write for actors. One of my problems as an actor was that I would get scenes that people in a room with a typewriter had written, and they had no sense of what the actor's objective would be, or what they were doing when they were saying these lines. They wrote all the flowerly dialogue, but there's no life going on. And people don't do that. There's stuff going on while there's a nightmare happening in your house. There's a life beyond that, and so I would approach scenes

"LOOKING AT CBS'S SCHEDULE, THERE IS NO PLACE FOR AMERICAN GOTHIC"

as a writer as I had as an actor, which helped the actors, and the actor's appreciated it."

Perhaps the most infamous scene to

emerge from the series so far has the predominantly evil Sheriff incongruously whistling *The Andy Griffith Show* theme.

"I was writing a scene where a deputy walks into the sheriff's office and some little, seemingly irrelevant, dialogue is supposed to take place, and I just flashed on *The Andy Griffith Show*. I said, 'We're in North Carolina, we've got the deputy coming in to talk with the sheriff.' "

It seemed a natural — but Cassidy explains his reasoning, "One of the problems I have with a lot of Horror type movies is that the characters in the movie have no relation to the audience's experience of pop culture. Only everyone in the audience knows that you don't open that door, but for some reason the characters in the movie haven't seen *The Amityville Horror*, haven't seen *Poltergeist* and they act as though they come from a different universe.

"I wanted to have our lead character have the same awareness about the world he was in as the audience. Because the minute he starts humming the *Andy Griffith* theme it deflates the cynicism of the people watching, because they're going to go, 'Oh, there's *The Andy Griffith* theme', well, he's seen the show too! And because he's whistling this theme, which is part of our collective pop consciousness that is supposed to be completely unthreatening, and *The Andy Griffith Show* in its way was probably as extreme a version of Americana as *American Gothic* is in its way, there are dark parallels."

With the unique emphasis on doing an adult series in which the struggle for good and evil is predominant, there were occasions when certain material was viewed negatively by the censors.

"We had a line in the pilot, 'Rack your balls,' which almost didn't get passed by the studio in the script," admits Cassidy. "Selena [a school teacher by day and Lucas's seductress by night] goes up to the deputy, and he's lying on the pool table, and she says, 'Rack your balls?' It was a seemingly

The deceased **Merlyn Temple** and her brother **Caleb**



innocuous question, and they didn't want it to be put in the script. And I said, 'That's her humour, she's Mae West.' Most of what Mae West said you couldn't get past the censors."

Despite the fact that the program was greeted with critical acclaim, it didn't muster the high ratings the network hoped for, and before the season was over the show was unceremoniously yanked from the schedule.

"I was disappointed by that," admits Cassidy. "In looking at CBS's schedule now, and looking at their agenda in terms of what kind of network they want to be, there really is no place for **American Gothic**."

But even though the show is down, it's not out.

"There's talk of doing a series of movies, there's talk of a feature. It will have a life in some way, because there's a huge fan base for it. The internet is a big support system for the show."

And for everyone who was left hanging when the program suddenly disappeared from their television screen, Cassidy promises that the final twelve episodes will be airing this summer.

"Unfortunately, CBS picked from the tree along the way and ran them out-of-order, so I'm afraid that the episodes that have yet to air will be somewhat confusing."

In his twenty-plus years of acting, both on television and the stage, singing, producing and writing, Cassidy seemingly has no trouble singling out which aspect has given him the most gratification.

"With writing there is this incredible satisfaction. You have an idea and then the first day of shooting where you actually show up after spending six months or a year, whatever the time-frame is from idea to production, and see all these people have a job because you had this idea. It's really an amazing thing. It's like this domino effect of how you actually effect people's lives. As an actor you sometimes wonder, 'What am I doing this for?' Maybe you're doing it to enlighten other people, or to gain enlightenment for yourself. As a writer you're doing that too, and it's not that people come to your movie or watch your television show that hopefully benefit by what you've done, it's literally the workers, all the

production people who are employed, and that's really neat."

There's many a slip between the final draft of a shooting script and the final version that is screened for the public, and most often they don't even resemble each other. But, in the case of **American Gothic**, the original idea that emerged from Cassidy's brain is what was broadcast to the TV audience.

"Certainly in the pilot," acknowledges Cassidy. "It's an amazing experience and one that I will never take

for granted, to see something realized that you dreamed about. Most of the time it doesn't work out that way. Maybe it's good, maybe it's bad, but it's definitely not what you had visualized. The pilot is really what I hoped it would be, and in some cases more."

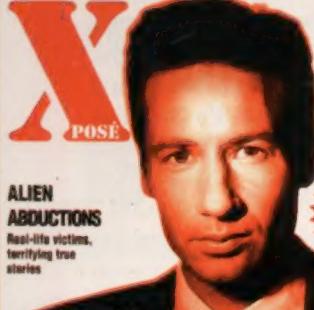
And with a TV pilot for **Ice-T** in the works for NBC, and a two-hour movie for Fox that will be shot in Ireland, Cassidy hopes to employ many more workers and see his visions once again reach the screen intact. ●

**The Satanic Sheriff
Buck (Gary Cole)**





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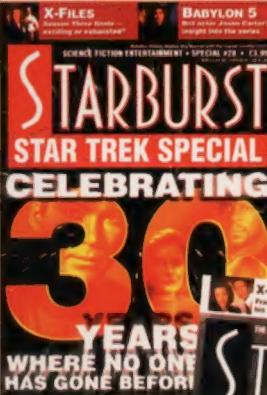


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